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SON TO SUSANNA

SON TO SUSANNA

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF
JOHN WESLEY

by

G. ELSIE HARRISON

COKESBURY PRESS
NASHVILLE

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INTRODUCTION

JOHN WESLEY was scarcely buried in the little back garden off City Road when the march of the biographers began. But it was almost thirty years before Wesley was thought worthy of a chronicler from among the more exalted realms of literary gentility. In 1820 Robert Southey, poet laureate and biographer of Nelson, published a two-volume *Life of Wesley*, which is yet worth reading, but important mainly because it gave Wesley literary respectability. Nevertheless, until the twentieth century, Wesley's biographers were Methodists or those interested in modern religious history. But in these latter years *Lives* of Wesley have been written by all sorts and conditions of men and women: novelists, professors of English, psychologists, theologians, journalists, Methodist preachers, and at least one Catholic priest. Some of these are works of filial piety, some merely biographers in search of a subject, some honest attempts to appraise the man and his significance.

The present volume belongs to the latter group. It is not a work of fiction nor a *Life* in the debunking tradition, but a real contribution toward the understanding of John Wesley. Mrs. Harrison is the daughter of the late Dr. John S. Simon, author of an extensive and accurate study of the history of Methodism. Her husband, Dr. A. W. Harrison, is a his-

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torian in his own right. The sources on which Mrs. Harrison draws are impeccable, most of them known to students of Wesley, but some used here for the first time. And no matter how much scholars may differ as to the soundness of Mrs. Harrison's interpretations, none can deny the skill with which she has used her materials. Her insight and lightness of touch are responsible for the impression made on some readers that SON TO SUSANNA is fiction and not history.

Something more than a portrait has been Mrs. Harrison's aim. She has striven to understand "the soil and the blood and the bones which went to the making of the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century." And Mrs. Harrison's path to understanding is new. She has chosen to show the "tides of emotion, the bleak experiences, the legacy of sisters and cousins and aunts" that went into the shaping of John Wesley. In the hands of one less acquainted with the sources, less aware of the significance of the Evangelical Movement, less appreciative of its religious values, the result might well have been simply another dreary book to prove that men are not gods. In the hands of the author the study of Wesley's emotional life and the way in which he was affected by his sisters, his cousins, and his aunts, is rich in suggestion and true to the Wesleyan genius.

In some detail Mrs. Harrison tells again the story of the Epworth Rectory, but Susanna Wesley and her daughters play the principal roles. While grounding her work on sound historical sources, the author's in-

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terpretation of Samuel Wesley's character is in the main that of Quiller-Couch's *Hetty Wesley*. And for brother Charles Mrs. Harrison has no great love. But whatever historians may say about the portraits of Samuel and Charles, on one thing there will be agreement: in this book are unforgettable pictures added to the gallery of eighteenth-century women. Here are Varanese and Aspasia (Sally Kirkham and Mrs. Pendarves, later Mrs. Delany), pretty Miss Sophy of Georgia, and Grace Murray. Heretofore Varanese and Aspasia have been dismissed as of little moment in the great Methodist's life, at the most, charming excuses for some lumbering and sophomoric letters written by the young Oxford fellow. Mrs. Harrison thinks otherwise and gives reason for the faith that is in her. Miss Sophy's half-tragic story has never been told better. As for Grace Murray, there is in this book about John Wesley a book about her also. Poor Grace's story, not very gently dealt with before, becomes, in these pages, high drama. Perhaps biographers, in their perverse way, will yet disagree; but even they will not be unmoved as they read. Unquestionably, the women in John Wesley's life have at last had their day.

But the tales of women more or less fair are not told for their sakes, but for the light that the telling throws upon the making of John Wesley's mind and heart and faith. Therefore, the major role is that of Susanna, wife of Samuel and mother of John and Charles, as well as of Emily and Sukey, of Molly and Hetty, of Patty and Kezia. Susanna's character, her

discipline, and her teaching are brought into focus in the mind of John. "His heart was his mother's and belonged to her God's, for so she had forged his chains in that remorseless discipline of the nursery when she had essayed, single-handed, the salvation of the souls of her children." For this book, Wesley is really the "Son to Susanna."

A well-known English historian, Dr. Hearnshaw of London University, has spoken of the freshness and unconventionality of Mrs. Harrison's writing. SON TO SUSANNA is as forthright as the eighteenth century, and for this the author of the *Journal of John Wesley* would have been the last to find fault. No one acquainted with early Methodism or later humanity will be shocked to learn that Wesley was not a plaster saint. And as for the connection of human loves with the love of God, all parish priests and most psychologists know how near is grandeur to our dust. But the Mars' Hill fraternity who seek always some new sensation will be disappointed. There is restraint as well as frankness, and there is also the charm of writing that has in it the echo of great literature. Emily Brontë did more than Freud to help Mrs. Harrison understand Wesley.

More than in her gallery of women, Mrs. Harrison is interested in John Wesley; and one almost suspects that, more than in John Wesley, she is interested in the Recall to Religion. For it is in view of that Call that she seeks to understand an epoch in English history when there really was a Revival of Religion. The author of SON TO SUSANNA is sure that the fires do

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not come down simply in answer to priestly chants however respectably phrased. Nor do they descend on altars drenched with saccharine sentimentalities. She knows that Wesley's own experience held in it something of English sunshine, of à Kempis' *Imitation*, of Epworth, and of dangers on the deep. But there was something else, that Something who is Someone. The day has gone when the Revival of the eighteenth century can be dismissed as a romantic flight from bitter realities to the smug security of ancient orthodoxies. If for nothing else, Mrs. Harrison's book would be worthy for these two sentences: "It was no anaemic 'Sweet Saviour,' caricature of religion, that turned the world upside down. It was rather something as fierce and elemental as a flash of lightning."

UMPHREY LEE.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A RECALL to Religion has been sounded through England. It is not clear from which direction this desirable result is to come, but there exists a pathetic belief that something may come of it do loud speakers but call loudly enough. Yet the heavens appear as brass, charm Church dignitaries never so wisely.

I have felt that a presentation of an epoch in English history where this very thing—a Revival of Religion—did take place might prove of interest. Could we understand something of the soil and the blood and the bones which went to the making of the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, we might be in a better position to appreciate the possibility of a revival of religion today. For this study I have used the first authorities of old journals and letters, and have hoped that thus a tiny stone of solidity might be cast up at least for the foot of Jacob's ladder to rest upon. It is, moreover, two hundred years ago that the angels descended to a little room in Aldersgate Street and John Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed. We cannot explain that revival of religion. Suffice for us to make research at the earthward part of the heavenly ladder and to remember that the ghostly visitants both ascended and descended in the patriarch's dream.

The eighteenth century and the twentieth century

are strangely alike. The poetry of both ages is the poetry of realism. The religion of both ages is a thing not quite to be taken seriously. Agnosticism prevails. Both epochs are singularly devoid of illusions. Both are ages of reason. The English miss of today says quite truly that the cultured mind is shocked at nothing, and the eighteenth century would heartily agree with her. Both centuries, on the other hand, declare that human faces unadorned are too pitiable, and so both centuries fly to the use of lipstick. Both prefer the companionship of lap-dogs to the disturbing human contacts of a life of disillusion. Both centuries have a kindred spiritual background, for the work of John Wesley would have been impossible without his Puritan ancestry, while his own great evangelical revival has made the background for our own times in its manifestation in Victorian religion.

Fire kindled in the eighteenth century. It swept the age of reason into ruin and brought in the age of romanticism. Can it happen again today? The stage is set, but we remain painfully conscious that yet God has not said a word. Perhaps it is the man this time who is wanting. It is the aim of this study of John Wesley to show the tides of emotion, the bleak experiences, the legacy of sisters and cousins and of aunts that went to the making of the instrument of salvation. Wesley discovered a secret which turned the world upside down and set its mark forever upon the history of England. It was compounded of his mother and the light of the Lincoln-

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shire fens. It was made up of Cotswold sunshine and the dreaming spires of Oxford. It was strengthened in the terrors of the seas and baptized in the tears of a lad's love. It sprang to heaven on the wings of a rushing flame and yet lay hidden in the depth of a human heart. It drew to itself the sweet tenderness of virgin love and the passion of love in maturity. It is the strangest secret ever compounded in the vale of tears, for it is believed to impersonate the very Love of God.

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I

FIRE CURTAIN

ON the night of February the ninth, in the year 1709, the Rectory of Epworth was in flames. It was a substantial house of old beams and plaster and it was covered with a deep thatch. It burned like matchwood, and the neighbors said that the old Rector had set it on fire himself.

Now the Rev. Samuel Wesley, A.M., might be a fool, but he was not just that kind of a fool. It was likely enough that he was the culprit, but withal an innocent one. His wife was ill and could not follow him round putting to rights his inadvertencies, and it was reasonable to suppose that he had been careless with his candle when he locked the Rectory up for the night. He had given a look to the corn room, just through the door from the main house-place, and could so easily forget about the thatch above his head as he raised his lighted candle to see that no one had run away with his bags of meal. The head of the Rector of Epworth was full of jingling rhymes and his soul was elevated by the heroism of the Duke of Marlborough, and candles and thatch simply did not exist. Glorious it was, and it made the flesh tingle to think of that eagre on the Trent, the poet's own river, and remember how, a few years before, it had upswelled its waters for the advent of the conquering

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hero. How had the Rector made it go now in his lovely lines and his tingling enthusiasm?

“Nor my lov’d Trent unmov’d; though calm before,
She with a double eagre sweeps the shore;
They only echo to the voice of Fame,
Conquest and Marlborough they all proclaim.”

Samuel Wesley’s wife, the incomparable Susanna, had no sort of illusions about this husband of hers. She knew he was a fool in worldly matters. Also she had not carried nineteen of his children without herself being ready for all emergencies. They met in the smoke-filled hall of the old Rectory that night and she needed none to tell her that her husband had, of course, forgotten the key to the front door and to safety. And yet even in the fierceness of her scorn she had to acknowledge that he was himself something of a hero after all. She could not but admire the way he pelted up those burning stairs to retrieve the key whilst, as swiftly, she pitied the grotesque figure of him waving above his head a most ridiculous pair of trousers. But it had always been like that all their married life. She could never really rid her heart of the love of him. She found marriage with a poet uphill work, and yet perhaps it was this very poetry which made people keep on forgiving the old man his sins. Now with his jingling enthusiasm he had set the Rectory on fire when Susanna could least afford to be homeless, and here he was playing the same old double role of defeating her rage and stirring her anger at one and the same time. There were all sorts of queer gaps in

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that night's work. Susanna Wesley suspected that her husband had been more anxious to save his books than his children, for Master John Wesley had almost perished in the flames. His father had heard the alarm, but had knelt down and committed the child's soul to God instead of going through hell to bring him out alive. Susanna had waded through flame to her knees, and when she had next seen her husband she could scarcely speak from cruelly smoke-blackened lips. She was very near her time and no one had given her a hand through the window, where the others escaped, so she had walked through lambent flame to collapse in the garden. She was laid on an improvised bed and, though hardly able to form the words, she did manage to get in a dagger-thrust about those books. Yet, almost in the same moment, her forgiveness was ready for this pitiable husband of hers, for she could afford to be generous when Master Jacky was at last safe by her side and the man did cut something of the hero's figure once again in that night of despair. She saw him stand up and face those peering neighbors who hated them and secretly rejoiced at their downfall with a pride like Lucifer's for all his poor five feet of stature. He was begrimed and clad in one crazy stocking, but by a miracle had connected himself with those whirling trousers. Into the dark night of terror and loss his voice rang out in challenge telling all Epworth that the wreck of his fortunes was nothing—absolutely nothing! Had he not saved wife and child and was not that fortune enough?

In that terrible night of smoke and drifting shadows little John Wesley snuggled up to his mother's side. He had been rescued by the neighbors from the nursery window and had been brought straight to her. If his father forsook him, then his mother would take him up. It was really her own sweet reasonableness that had saved him. Through six years of a strenuous life she had taught him first how to reason and then how to act. The child had been left behind asleep when the nursemaid, with brother Charles in her arms, had fled to safety. John had awakened in a strange light room and reasoned shrewdly that it must be morning. It followed from this that he must call his nurse to take him up, for his mother was adamant about that. But there was none that answered. Again his mother had taught him not to scold and cry out upon such inaction but to investigate the cause, and when nothing could be done about it he must "just 'thole." So out of the bed-curtains came his little head. He saw the streaks of fire playing on the ceiling as his father saw them "like a lamp." This surely needed investigation. Consumed by insatiable curiosity, John Wesley went to the door to see what was the matter and to force an entrance to his mother's protection. But here an added wonder met him as also a great burning and crackling of fire. Lest this should kindle upon him, he hastily withdrew. His mother's rules again were adamant about children and fire. That way of escape was quite cut off, so, by a careful process of elimination, there remained but one way more.

FIRE CURTAIN

Jacky Wesley escaped to life by the bedroom window and the kindly shoulders of rescuing farm hands, who had seen his questing face at the lattice.

His sister Hetty had felt the burning thatch fall on her feet and she had gone straight to her father. John, after using his mother's weapon of reason, found her at last, and by her side the rough places were made plain. Hetty's confidence was misplaced as it was the gardener who rescued her in the end, but John with unerring judgment knew the utter trustworthiness of his mother. Hetty's life would come to be devastated by her father. John Wesley's whole career would stand or fall by his mother. He would look for her protection in the dangers of life and he would always reason with fire. Susanna, for her part, never forgot that night of terror and how the little boy was saved from dreadful death. Her mind dwelt in a special way upon this child and his deliverance, and she was never tired of pointing that moral and adorning that tale. His tender ears were never allowed to forget the roar and crackle of flames, and around his innocent head played those queer intangible flames of hell which could only be kept at arm's length by Herculean effort. God's demands for his ultimate salvation became as adamant as his mother's rules for his walk and conduct. She called him the Brand plucked from the burning, and when she was alone made pious vows on his behalf: "I do intend to be more especially careful of the soul of this child." So it came about that the imagery of the child's mind had in it a special place for leaping

flames, and an unconscious fear lurked somewhere deep down in his being. That Epworth fire made a cruel reality of the Puritan's Hell, and it behooved the child to walk delicately ever afterwards. John Wesley believed that he had actually managed to reach the age of ten years without sinning away that sign of the God who answers by fire. Given Susanna Wesley as a mother and ten years of life in Epworth Rectory and the thing was done. At the mature age of thirty-four the little Brand plucked from the burning would inevitably couch the terms of his love-letters in the metaphors of fear and flames: "I find, Miss Sophy, I can't take fire into my bosom and not be burnt. I am therefore retiring for a while to desire the direction of God. Join with me, my friend, in fervent prayer that He would show me what is best to be done."

II

SUSANNA WESLEY

THE eighteenth century was a reasonable age and in no wise squeamish. John Wesley was as reasonable and unashamed as any modern psychologist when he declared that his destiny was fixed even before that night of the Epworth fire. With a shrewd flash of his inspired common sense he told his friend Adam Clarke that "If I were to write my own life I should begin it before I was born." It really did all begin so far away as that, for the little body of God's firebrand was fashioned in a strangely quiet period of reconciliation between those parental protagonists—Susanna and Samuel Wesley. But it had been reconciliation after the fury of one tremendous quarrel.

Susanna Wesley was a woman of indomitable courage, but just then stark reality had nearly strangled the life out of her. She had started out gaily enough upon the path of life as the beautiful and clever daughter of Dr. Annesley, the great Puritan Divine. In that queer old house in Spital Yard, London, she had been wont to take all life and theology for her province. She was accustomed to enter upon the great arguments of free will and foreknowledge absolute and drink delight of battle with her peers. Her very maiden love of Samuel Wesley had been born in a theological argument. The Dissenters were fast

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becoming Unitarians, but there had been something of the grand manner about the way that young Sam Wesley had stayed her reasonable hands when she would have divested Christ of His Divinity. There was something of beauty and of glory in the young man's jingles then—to be able to sing of a Hero's death like that:

“Behold the Saviour of Mankind
Nailed to the shameful tree.
How vast the love that Him inclined
To bleed and die for me.”

She owed Samuel Wesley a debt of gratitude for that, and when the old man came to die that was all she cared to remember. His sins were buried with him, and she restrained her son's ready epitaphs with just that face cut by village skill upon his tombstone in Epworth Churchyard:

HERE
LYETH ALL THAT WAS
MORTAL OF SAMUEL WESLEY,
A.M. HE WAS RECTOR OF EP-
WORTH 39 YEARS AND DEPARTED
THIS LIFE 25 OF APRIL 1735
AGED 72.

AS HE LIV'D SO HE DIED
IN THE TRUE CATHOLICK FAITH
OF THE HOLY TRINITY IN UNITY,
AND THAT JESUS CHRIST IS GOD
INCARNATE: AND THE ONLY
SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

But there was an uphill road to be negotiated ere the Rector was laid in that narrow and peaceful bed. Susanna Wesley was to have nineteen children in twenty years of married life and to undertake the charges of battle always with an empty war chest. Her husband was never out of debt and the family often lacked the bare necessities of life. In this bleak contest the mother must yet keep an eye on the souls as well as the bodies of her numerous offspring. She was not satisfied with the mere formation of flesh and bone and sinew, but she travailed again in birth for the souls of her children. It was before the advent of John Wesley that she realized that unless she made such an effort she must be overwhelmed. If she were to keep any of that treasure which had come to her concealed in the Lordship of Christ she must bid farewell to the world. She seems to have made that discovery, as she frankly tells son John, "when I was with child of you." It was then that she realized that in this devastating spate of children she must yet achieve the whole armor of the ascetic. She had certainly nothing of help to expect from her poetical husband, for a man no longer was as an hiding-place from the tempest. The Rock of Ages alone remained beautiful in its very austerity, and she confessed quite simply, "I have long since chosen Him as my only good."

It had not been so desperate at the beginning. The life at South Ormsby with the little church on the hill and the humble parsonage had had elements of idealism. Samuel Wesley could still write poetry

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to his wife then and the family was still manageable. But in the background already loomed the shadow of debt, for, while Samuel Wesley hugged the precious thought to himself that he was a second Milton, the demand notes flowed unchecked. The anxiety was beginning to tell when Mary was born in a poor crippled body, but at the lowest there was always hope alike for Mr. Micawber and for the Rector of South Ormsby. He had been lost to the world in his poem of the Life of Christ, but had so far emerged as to have the good sense to dedicate his work to Queen Mary of Orange. In consequence the living of Epworth was bestowed upon the poor man in recognition of his hardihood in scaling Parnassus with such a theme. So came Hetty Wesley into the world on the crest of poetry and success and on the heels of poor sister Mary. Now Epworth was a good living and the fortune of the Wesley family seemed established until the awful truth dawned that it was poorer than it had ever been before. A whole series of misfortunes dogged the steps of the poetical Rector of Epworth, for his barns fell, his harvests failed and his cows were slashed by night by some hidden hand. But the losses the Rector felt most keenly were those consequent on "child bearing." He always spoke in a bewildered way about these frequent events, and he considered them as acts of God along with the falling of his barns. There was really no stemming the tide with this drain on his resources of "one child at least per annum." So he tells the Archbishop of York in a series of letters

which, for all their flourishes, have the well-known technique of the beggar. The strain of the thing was wearing the poor man out, and he was a perfect hero to be able to flourish at all with this: "I have had but three children born since I came hither about three years since but another coming." Susanna appears in the picture as simply going out into the highways and hedges and compelling them to come in. The much tried Rector of Epworth could not be expected to cope with such conduct: "Last night my wife brought me a few children. There are but two yet, a boy and a girl, and I think they are all at present: we have had four in two years and a day."

The day before these twins were born there was about six shillings in the house. Susanna had taken her suffering spouse aside and made him club his resources with her own to buy coals. It is surely Susanna's careful reckoning of that two years and a day, for time and sense were clearly all no more to her husband. The year of the arrival of these second twins was not out before Susanna was with child again, and the time for open rebellion had clearly come. The revolt was signalled in the Epworth parlor, and the moment chosen was the time of meeting at the family altar. Susanna quite definitely refused to say "Amen" to her husband's pious prayer for King William III. It is probable that any monarch which Samuel Wesley chose would have been unpopular with Mrs. Samuel just then, but the Stuarts were her choice and she would stand or fall by them. Never had the battered banner of that

forlorn clan from Scotland a stranger camp follower than the mother of all the Wesleys. The Rector waited for the dutiful response, but there was none that answered. He got up from his knees and lost his temper. He was just over five feet in height and his anger nearly burst his little body, but he swore he would have no rival in his house, and he thundered his ultimatum of "Two kings—two beds." But Susanna waited, strangely unmoved. Her husband turned on his heel, and throwing some few belongings into his saddle-bags took horse for London. He was perhaps glad to get away from those steady eyes of Susanna, and in any case he knew he was born for higher things than "Epworth steeple." Was he not the friend of Pope and Swift? Had he not written a poem to Dryden to say he would not like to be in that poet's shoes at the Judgment Day? Were not Dukes and Archbishops proud to have Sam Wesley for their protégé, and was he not equally known and respected by Royalty itself?

And yet he could not quite keep up the pose of outraged lord and master. Perhaps he could not leave Susanna alone for her dark hour, for he returned to Epworth for her bringing to bed with Anne. In the strange ramifications of history the accession of Stuart Anne to the throne very neatly saved the situation not only for England but for the exiled Rector of Epworth. The bells of the Coronation of 1702 rang Samuel Wesley back to his duties and to his wife's long-suffering and forgiving bosom, and the child of the reconciliation was a little boy called

John Benjamin—the Brand plucked from the burning. His mother made her resolutions and forsook the world. The glorious method and routine of the cloister should yet save her soul and the souls of her children. Waves and storms might go over her head, but she had found the way of peace, for from henceforth she was resolved to be in the world but not of it. The quiver was not yet full in spite of that tactful hint to the Almighty in the second name of the babe of reconciliation. After all it was not a wholehearted effort of faith as Benjamin was only tacked on, as a gesture of pious hope, to this baby alone, for all the other Wesley children had but one honest name apiece. And in any case the world could not be saved without Charles Wesley, who was not to make his appearance until the eighteenth on the list, and so vindicate the Lord's partiality for large families. But Mrs. Wesley had now got the Rev. Samuel at last into proper perspective. His five feet of manhood no longer filled her horizon, but he became no more to her than the hair shirt of her cloister. She passed through all subsequent happenings not much above a wet-shod. If she could not control this devastating urge of life she could at least reign as queen in her own kingdom. So, almost gaily, she betook herself to her nursery of scholars, for here she could reign, absolutely, in her own right.

III

METHOD

THE little Wesleys might be as poor as tinkers but they were never vulgar. From their earliest days their mother taught them to cry quietly and never to grasp after their food. Before they could well speak or go they were taught to ask God's blessing by signs upon the mean repasts served to them in Epworth Rectory. They changed their linen regularly and went into their queer confined cradle at stated times to remain there until the inevitable hour of resurrection. As Jehovah was to the Children of Israel so was Susanna to the little Wesleys. But she, unlike the great I Am, would not have borne with their manners in the wilderness for five minutes let alone forty years. The little Wesleys were obliged to eat everything put before them, and their mother believed that they would have taken poison without question should she have demanded that Socratic sacrifice of them. If they ate between meals they were "most certainly beat." They were never allowed to run into the kitchen to procure unlawful provender, and were not allowed to ask a servant to do them any service without prefixing to the lisped request the sentence, "Pray John or Mary will you do such a thing." Even among themselves the curt Christian

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name must not be used. Brother John must always ask Sister Hetty for what he wanted and, thus impeded, carry on heated nursery discussion. There was to be no loophole for the unbalanced uprush of passion or desire, for the first and most important matter in the curriculum of Susanna Wesley was to break the child's will: "I insist upon conquering the will of children betimes because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. But when this is thoroughly done then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents, till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind." It is abundantly clear that each little Wesley was a potential Methodist when at the age of five their real education began.

What of the joys of being five years old? Susanna Wesley was stranger to the modern lyric of *When We Were Very Young* or even *Now We Are Six*. In Epworth Rectory life was real, life was earnest. As the birthday morning dawned Susanna put herself in fighting trim and she really did enjoy that day. The decks were cleared for action, and the little scholar and his mother were shut in together in a room no one might enter until the child had his letters by heart. Susanna did not mind repeating a thing twenty times over if, after that, the infant retained the information. She also said that it was surprising how much a child could learn under these conditions given ordinary health. But then there was no dis-

charge in the war, and to run into the garden was a thing not even named amongst Christians. There was much Bible and Prayer Book instruction, which was carried out by each child taking a younger one aside for a quiet time each day and so foreshadowing the system of the pupil-teacher. In addition Susanna interviewed them all on different evenings of the week for intensive spiritual culture. Jacky never forgot his own Thursday evening. In years to come he found it the most appropriate night in which to write letters to his women friends. Under the protecting memory of his mother it felt a more reasonable and safe proceeding than on any other night of the week. He would never wholeheartedly play with fire because Susanna had seen to all that in her methodical training of the sons of Samuel Wesley.

When the time came for the boys to leave the shelter of home Susanna Wesley pursued them with her earnest letters. To Samuel Junior there are wise words on lifting the elbow, and to John, in a brave new world of *Beggar's Opera* and glorious women, a timely admonition: "Your arguments against horse-races do certainly conclude against masquerades, balls, plays, operas and all such light and vain diversions, which, whether the gay people of the world will own it or no, do strongly confirm and strengthen the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life; all which we must renounce or renounce our God and hope of eternal salvation." He had brought the rebuke about his ears because he wanted to know what his mother thought of a poser about Sunday

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concerts which one of his lady friends had put to him from the gay Court life of eighteenth-century London, but his mother improved the shining hour also with a shrewd stroke about these very sirens: "I am verily persuaded that the reason why so many seek to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven but are not able is there is some Delilah, some one beloved vice, they will not part with; hoping that by a strict observance of their duty in other things that particular fault will be dispensed with.¹ But alas! They miserably deceive themselves. The way which leads to heaven is so narrow, the gate we must enter in so strait that it will not permit a man to pass with one known unmortified sin about him." It was a tough proposition with which to brighten a student's breakfast table. It was difficult to forget that Brand plucked from the burning with a post-bag full of such uncompromising morality. When the assaults of the world came upon John Wesley he instinctively thought of his mother and of fire and was afraid: "The gate we must enter is so strait that it will not permit a man to pass with one known unmortified sin about him."

✓Susanna Wesley had dedicated her first-born to the work of the ministry, but the education which she gave to all her children was so contrived as to turn both boys and girls into priests of the Church of England. They imbibed theology with their mother's milk. Theirs was the priest's sound classical education allied to the presbyter's grasp of God's Law. The little Wesleys would have made respectable bish-

ops in eighteenth-century England. They could beat many a one in high places by being able to read aloud very beautifully. John Wesley never heard anyone read better than his eldest sister Emily, and he loved to hear her give to *Paradise Lost* all the swing of her own passion and the intelligent assistance of her Puritan background. He would never meet better-educated women than his own sisters and yet he would never meet more tragic ones. With minds stored with the music of Homer and hands working to the pageantry of Milton's verse, they were condemned to be hen-girls and swine-herds on the filth of the water-logged flats of Lincolnshire. Their brothers all passed into their appointed place in the bosom of Mother Church, but Emily, Sukey, Molly, Hetty, Patty, and Kezia all knew the reality of Piers Plowman's lament for "The woe of these women that waneth in cots."

In this miracle effort of salvation for her children Susanna Wesley could look for little help from her good husband. On the contrary he had an unfortunate habit of putting sand in the workings of her dear, delightful method. He stalks between the lines of her letters as the agent of Bolshevism. Now Susanna had her fixed rules for the children's conduct, but her impetuous spouse would lose his temper and frighten her little Methodists quite out of their wits. She says, "A law was made that whoever was charged with a fault of which they were guilty, if they would ingenuously confess it and promise to amend, should not be beat. This rule prevented a good deal of lying

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and would have done more if one in the family would have observed it. But he could not be prevailed on, and therefore was often imposed upon by false colors and equivocations which none would have used, but one, had they been kindly dealt with; and some, in spite of all, would always speak truth plainly." Life was clearly difficult for the devotee, and the star pupil, John Wesley himself, had an uncomfortable time with his father, for he got both beaten and laughed at for observing the rules too well. His mother had taught him to reason out everything, with the result that he debated every step of the way forward and made a man like his father very angry. A poet cannot be expected to tolerate too much reason. He would thunder at the child, "You think to carry everything by dint of argument," and turning to his mother he followed up his advantage in that trying strain of crude banter: "I protest, sweetheart. I think our Jack would not attend to the most pressing necessities of nature unless he could give a reason for it." But Susanna struggled on and in her heart delighted in her apt pupil and grappled him to herself with hoops of steel. So would she get him through every difficulty and every decision of his life. So in the slippery paths of youth she would hope for the best when "some Delilah" might arise to tempt him from the straight and narrow way. She liked to see him meditating as she handed him that pear from the Rectory garden, and when asked if he would have it she liked to hear his baby solemnity pronounce that portentous answer: "I will think of it." His father

might storm and crack his unseemly jokes, but Susanna Wesley knew very well that she was about. She had not lived with this same father for so many boisterous years without making a gallant effort to steady his sons before they took the way of life alone. There was lively domestic conflict and a hundred alarms of war packed into that little philosopher of Epworth Rectory who was presently to turn the world upside down. It takes all sorts of background to accomplish a revival of religion. Susanna Wesley might break all the rules of the modern psychologist for the training of children, and her husband might add all the disadvantages of discord for the tender minds of children, but between them, in some unaccountable way, they manufactured the instrument of God's salvation.

IV

SAMUEL WESLEY

THE Rector of Epworth loved to call himself the Poet of the Isle of Axholme, but he was really not any better a poet than Axholme bid fair to be an island. That bit of land in Lincolnshire was an island only by virtue of surrounding rivers, but they served—Samuel Wesley could whisper to himself the soothing title of “The island poet.” His daughter Emily, being brought up in the hard school of his parentage, cut across his cadences with her brutal summing up of his character. To her the poet stands condemned for his “unaccountable love of discord.” It was too true. The poet of the isle was a man not quite at peace with himself, and he was possessed of a temper which matched that deeply hidden discord. He could never quite forgive himself for the things which had been done when he quitted the beleaguered camp of Dissent for the safety and preferment of the Church of England. He told himself that he got nothing out of it, and as for flying from persecution, why, that was the one thing that would have kept him in the old army, but he protests too much to be quite honest. Perhaps it is not pleasant to acknowledge the innate snob, nor is it in keeping with the halo of the poet. His brother-in-law, Dunton, the book-seller, had no illusions about Sam Wesley’s apostasy.

He writes him down as determined on preferment and knows that he will turn his back on any old friend to secure a higher position for himself. It was known that Samuel Wesley was the man to kick a ladder away after he had used it to scale the heights. He meant to go higher. He was even fool enough to talk about his prospects, for Dunton is obviously delighted that he cannot yet be called "Your Grace." His habit of dedicating his second-rate verse to Royalty is also assessed at its proper value in the plan of advancement. Dunton rolls that "Rector of Epworth" under his tongue and despises him in his heart. It galled the bookseller to think that he had printed much of the Rector's verse and provided him with a Dissenting income when he was all the time scaling the heights of Establishment. It made him furious to remember that Samuel Wesley really owed all he was or could be to those old despised Dissenters and that his father had once languished in Blandford gaol for conscience' sake. What would old John Wesley, appointed to his living by the Lord and Cromwell's Triers, have said to the priest of Epworth parish and the poet of the Isle of Axholme?

It was in the Dissenting Academies that Samuel Wesley had come by all his learning and all his poetry. He had had the advantage of a real scholar in Veale of Stepney to direct his studies in youth. But he was not above washing all the dirty linen of the Academies in public and he shouted their sins from the housetops. The Dissenters had really paid his footing first on the primrose path to preferment,

but he liked to forget all that and remember only that he was a son of Oxford by his own charges and Rector of Epworth by his own merit. And so he protested and so he attacked the Dissenters and found no peace for his soul by day or by night. Behind the Rector of Epworth always stalked the ghost of his past life. It moved with him along his road to perferment and was packed up amongst the books and tables on the wagons moving along that road. He was always in the position of a man fighting his own shadow to restore his confidence. He spent a great deal too much time in fighting the Dissenters of his parish and in publishing literature against them. It poisoned his brain with venom and muddled the limpid stream of his inspiration. The Dissenters became his obsession, for he could never really cut loose from his own shadow. A great part of the distress in Epworth Rectory was due to this perpetual controversy, for the Dissenters of the parish hated the Rector for his home thrusts and never lost an opportunity of jeering at his children or making his farming efforts as difficult as possible. They threatened to "squeeze out his guts" in Parliamentary Elections and clapped him in prison until he should pay the uttermost farthing of his debts to them. At the Election of 1705 they serenaded his Rectory windows with diabolical rams' horns and yokel hilarity. And though of course it was all very funny from the Dissenters' point of view it caused the death of his latest infant and imperilled the life of the so lately delivered but yet undaunted Susanna Wesley. There

was such a tumult in the street then that the Wesley nurse could not sleep, but when she finally managed to drop off she promptly overlaid the youngest Wesley and later delivered the baby's body, cold and stiff, to its mother.

Susanna must have had need of all her philosophy that night. What thoughts were hers as, sore and dejected, she lay on the Rector's bed and heard the ribald jests bawled from the throats of his persecutors? There are some alive in England still who have heard the serenade of the Skimity Ride, and they confess that the hollow sound of the ram's horn is absolutely bloodcurdling. It is reputed to have brought down the walls of Jericho, and its assault on the frail tenement of clay is devastating. Susanna was thankful that her husband was lying low at Gainsborough, but it could not have escaped her notice that she was carrying the heavy end of the stick of his folly. Yet she knew that somehow still he twisted her heart in pity for him. She could not really bear him to be ill treated. She hated this roaring mob outside her sick-room, and remembered her husband kindly as the champion of orthodoxy. These Dissenters were really very ill-bred, and the ram's horn was a diabolical instrument of music. Under all the pain and the distress there remained hidden a discomfort of mind, a stress and a puzzle of old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago. For Susanna herself had quitted that old camp of Dissent along with the lover of her youth, and yet she could never forget her own great father and his unwaver-

ing loyalty to these uncomfortable heretics. Life was such a bundle of contradictions, such a tangle of conflicting loyalties, such a questioning of what should be done and what would have been better left undone. Yet beaten in body and mind something still held fast. Above the blare of the ram's horn and the Dissenters' tumultuous devotion to Jehovah, the whisper of the husband of her youth and the champion of orthodoxy could still warm her heart: "that Jesus Christ is God incarnate and the only Saviour of mankind." Was it not worth the wringing of the heart by old memories to have kept that Lordship of Christ safe in a world which had denied Him? The fierce Calvinism of Dissent had no loophole in it to let in the world to a chance of salvation. It was to be the Church of Susanna's adoption which was to keep the door on the latch for all returning sinners. Hope was bound up in the sacrifice on Calvary. Let the rams' horns bellow there outside the gates of Epworth Rectory, for Susanna knew all the time that she was on the winning side.

It was in this same year of 1705 that the Elect Dissenters finally clapped Samuel Wesley into Lincoln Gaol. It meant almost literal starvation for his family, but Susanna was ready for the emergency and firm on the side of orthodoxy. She managed to get enough bread to feed the little scholars in her nursery, and sent her husband all her rings to buy him comfort in his confinement. Of course he sent them back, untouched and unpawned, like David and the water of Bethlehem's Well. Always Samuel Wesley

knew how to do the fine thing, for it seemed that his poetry rather helped him there. Also, as he languished in his debtors' prison, he had a hidden source of satisfaction besides the comfort of his muse. He had just had time to get Susanna churched before he was locked up, and at Epworth that event had become one of the fixed feasts in the Calendar of the Christian year. In glorious contradistinction to those ribald Dissenters it behoved a priest of the Church of England to fulfil all righteousness.

John Wesley was two years old when that furious battle between Establishment and Dissent was waged in Epworth streets. Did he wake up that night and cry quietly because he was afraid and the bawling yokels sounded so near and menacing? It is true that it was all to go into the pattern of his mind and that he was destined never to get out of earshot of the rams' horns of Dissent. It must have formed a background to nursery life of a peculiarly uncomfortable kind, and his father's unfortunate entanglements were assuredly due to this very bogey of Dissent. It was a specter of the mind to more than the Rector of Epworth, for his enemies would fling such curses over his garden walls that the children would rush into the house in a panic. The one who was to revive all religion in England and to re-spiritualize both Establishment and Dissent had to come just this way of fear in childhood. Then, he had to suffer that horrible turmoil as best he could, but the years would come when he would stake out a city of refuge for his followers which was neither Establishment nor

Dissent and yet was fearlessly compounded of both. The Methodists of a later day were to be of Presbyterian Kirk organization and yet to retain the use of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England. What concord hath light with darkness or Christ with Belial? The answer seems to depend on the fine confused background of John Wesley and upon the conflicting strains in his inheritance. The time was to come when, in his small person, Roundhead and Cavalier should become reconciled and Stuart King and Commonwealth nation should blend in his own polity. It was to be a compromise essentially Methodistic and essentially English also, for it sustained the poise of conservatism by means of the passion of revolution.

V

EMILY WESLEY

IN the Rectory of Epworth Susanna Wesley might be able to keep a shadow of a shade of the old glory alight round the head of her husband, but his daughters were endowed with the clearest of clear eyes. The burden of life fell cruelly upon the shoulders of the eldest daughter Emily, who stands on the mud flats of the Rector's farms, like some tragic queen, denouncing her father's jingling folly. She heard the interminable theological arguments in the Rectory and all the grand pretensions of the restless poet, but to her it befell to get a decent dinner on the table and to get herself and her sisters more or less respectably clad. It made her angry to find that after a bumper harvest they were still as poor as church mice and that not a farthing remained to buy a yard of cloth for the family dressmaking. She noticed with jealous eye that it was never the Rector who went short. He must be off on his journeys to London and be well provided for his visits to Convocation whether Susanna and the children found bread or not at home. Emily lays the whole responsibility of their abject state upon the shoulders of the champion of orthodoxy: "After the fire, when I was seventeen years old," she says, "I was left alone with my mother and lived easy for one year—but after we were gotten

into our house and all the family settled, in about a year's time, I began to find out that we were ruined. Then came on London journeys, Convocations of blessed memory, that for seven winters my father was at London and we at home in intolerable want and affliction; then I learnt what it was to seek money for bread, seldom having any without such hardships in getting it that much abated the pleasure of it. Thus we went on growing worse and worse; all of us children in scandalous want of necessities for years together; vast income but no comfort or credit with it."

She really could not be expected to take very kindly to her father's ecclesiastical pretensions or to his verses and his fine hopes of preferment. She was so uncompromising in her upright and downright character that it almost seemed that a ghost of those old haunting Puritans had forced an entrance, after all, into the Anglican sheepfold. It was uncomfortable to have a daughter who could throw down a challenge at any moment like this: "Nor shall I put my conscience under the direction of mortal man, frail as myself. To my own Master I stand or fall. Yea, I shall not scruple to say that all such desires in you or any other ecclesiastic seem to me to look very much like Church tyranny and assuming to yourself a dominion over your fellow creatures which never was designed you by God." It was still more uncomfortable to have a daughter with such clear eyes that she could see through all strutting arrogance and all high-sounding talk, with a chuckle too at the

bantam's expense: "Our family are full of fine sanguine dreams. My old belief yet remains that my father will never be worth a groat, as the saying is, and we of the female part of the family be left to get our own bread or starve as we see fit."

The Wesley boys were able to strike out in life with Charterhouse and Westminster behind them and Oxford on before. They left the quarrels and the hunger and the shame behind them in Lincolnshire, but the girls must live, day in, day out, in that explosive uncertain atmosphere which had turned their mother into an espoused nun and from which marriage alone could rescue them. But Emily's dreams of romance were doomed to perish along with her father's sanguine hopes. She was poet enough to face all the toil of Epworth Rectory and all the poverty and anxiety as long as her lover Leyburne—that glorious young man from Oxford—comforted her by his friendship. She was deeply in love with him with all the warmth of her strong nature, and when the family broke off the engagement she was almost desperate. It seemed too cruel when she was carrying every burden at the Rectory for them all, and yet fate in the shape of "a near relative" said that it must not be. There followed nights of agony in her attic and days emptied of hope. There was a passion in these Wesley children, for all Susanna's careful banking down of fire, that flared up like gunpowder in terrible conviction or frustration. Emily longed for death and felt she must somehow get out of it all, but the most revolutionary thing she found to do

was to go teaching at Lincoln in a boarding school for girls. There, amid colored worsteds, canvas and silks, she assayed to mend a broken heart. She had never been in a school before, but took speedily to the way of life and found some comfort from money in her pocket and in the strange respect which was shown to her as the school mistress. She is surely one of the earliest of our feminists in rebellion against the subjection of women and glorying in the liberating profession, for, she says, "I seemed gotten into another world; and though I worked hard for my living, yet I could maintain myself with working, and I was very willing to do it."

The glorious experiment was not to last long as home claims were not to be denied and Emily found herself back in the bosom of her family and very soon without a penny in the world. The Poet of the Isle of Axholme found her plenty of employment in feeding his hens and washing his muddy cassock and mending the toes of his stockings. Once again the Rector's well-known roar of command and his imperious knock became part and parcel of Emily's life. The time of glorious first love, the effort of escape was over. Emily faced life with a Hamlet resignation and a heart of bitterness towards her father. Her sister Hetty wrote a poem to her to celebrate her eclipse, and aptly describes the home comforts and surroundings of the Wesley family:

"Fortune has fixed thee in a place
Debarred of wisdom, wit and grace;

SON TO SUSANNA

High births and virtue equally they scorn,
As asses dull on dunghills born;
Imperious as the stones their heads are found,
Their rage and hatred steadfast as the ground.
With these unpolished wights thy youthful days
Glide slow and dull, and Nature's lamp decays:
Oh, what a lamp is hid 'midst such a sordid race!"

Emily's devotion to her mother was the one thing that reconciled her to her fate, and she decided to stay with her while she lived, for it was her conviction that "she has so little comfort in the world beside that I think it barbarous to abandon her."

Between John Wesley and this fiercely loving, fiercely hating elder sister there was forged a strange link of intimacy. She was quite ten years his senior, but she wrote to him with the frankness of a contemporary and he knew all her secret love and anguish: She trusted him absolutely, and knew he would enter into all the home news and the intimacies of clashing personalities and penurious makeshifts which made up her world. Backwards and forwards to Oxford went these friendly sisterly letters, and it was a correspondence peculiarly dear to the young man away from home. Susanna kept him well supplied with moral maxims and judicious proddings in the right direction for his own salvation, but Emily could stoop to warm human gossip, and he could see and hear her as he read her letters. He could see her standing up to her enraged father and hear her saying those provocative remarks which would force the

Rector into irate contradiction and then into the position of selling the pass from sheer obstinacy and fear of ever finding himself on the same side as Emily.

The girls had the Annesley inheritance of good looks, but they had little chance of elegance. In Epworth Rectory candles were shared, and even Madam Hetty had to sit waiting in the dark ere her father's imperious knock gave permission to her to take his candle and go to bed. What tragic faces looked out from battered mirrors, and what hopes of what might have been haunted those beautiful eyes! John Wesley could see them all in his mind's eye and at second hand became acquainted with a woman's heart. This intimacy of the beloved brother with his sisters was to be of vital importance to him in the work that lay before him. It was so safe and yet so highly intense a friendship that it exactly suited the young man's alert appreciation and his diffidence. It was a strange education for the leader of the revival of religion, but it was to give him something which all the theories of Church Polity could never do. It was to establish a love of fellowship which was delightful yet unexacting in personal demands and to create a love of home in the savage wilderness of this world. It was to form an appreciation of feminine correspondence which would go through life with him. He would always write his best letters to women and be at his best in their company. He had a natural ease and carriage in feminine society learned from those old days at home which was calculated to make women his slaves forever. But he was not

SON TO SUSANNA

fond of effusion and they would do best with him in a friendship where he could call them simply by the old dear name of sister. In the days to come the tragic little circle of girls in Epworth Rectory would reap their reward. Theirs was to be an immortality of the spirit, and their ghostly descendants were to be those great women of Methodism who together, in feminine bands, and singly, in savage homes, were to bring sweetness and light to a brutal age of fierce masculinity. John Wesley, in the work of the revival of religion in England, was to give a special place of importance to women and to pay them the compliment of equality. He faced his herculean task with humble men and women of no high calling or title, but baptized wholeheartedly to the work in the humble names of Brothers and Sisters.

VI

JOB

THE Rector of Epworth deplored the large quiverful of daughters which the Almighty had seen fit to thrust upon him. He made shift to lighten the burden with some unsatisfactory marriages for them, and told his friends that thus he crept uphill a little faster than before when they were all at home on his hands. He boasted that he had three sons with the best education in England, and loved to roll Westminster, Charterhouse and Oxford under his tongue, and when he had time to think of it he remarked that he had put out sundry daughters "to a way of living." The truth was that there was a new inmate in Epworth Rectory and the decks must be cleared for action—all roads now led but one way. The stranger was none other than the Patriarch Job, who would find his dunghap conveniently ready for his enthronement on the mud-flats of the Isle of Axholme. This *Job* was Sam Wesley's latest hero, and he was concocting such a book of erudition and art as to make the world wonder. *Job* was to be the Rector's *magnum opus* and to achieve the very last pinnacle in the Temple of Fame. Money was lavished upon *Job* and everywhere people were pestered for his support. Swift and Pope had to lend a hand and a famous horse of the nobility had to be en-

graved to adorn the page of old Sam Wesley's work. Samuel Wesley Junior made himself a nuisance in London and in the west striving to enlist the subscriptions of patrons for the venture, and everyone at Epworth was forced into this service either with pen or pencil or the elusive search of the cross reference.

Hetty Wesley was her father's amanuensis and was a great help to him in his literary labors. She could write better poetry than he could himself, and was full of such a sprightly humor as to delight her old father. But it was not to be expected that so fair a queen of Epworth was to find entire satisfaction either in old Sam Wesley or in the patriarch himself. Passion had awakened in her also, and the sorrows of Job must play second fiddle to the joys of first love. Of course the match was considered unsuitable, for it was likely that the young man had hailed from that horrid dissenting past into which Hetty had been introduced on a glorious visit to one Uncle Matthew Wesley in London. Equally of course a child of Samuel Wesley took the law into her own hands, for the dice were too heavily weighted against one born, like Hetty, in the peak period of the Rector's poetical raptures. She must see her lover if the heavens fell, and she would stay out all night with him if necessity compelled her so to do. And stay she did, and down the heavens fell, and poor hapless Hetty was consumed.

Samuel Wesley had never flown into such a temper as that in all his long series of alarms and excursions.

He was "inconceivably exasperated" against her, and wreaked so horrible a vengeance upon her as to strike all laughter from her soul. Perhaps he had always been jealous of her bright wits and he always had detested a rival. So in a rage of jealousy and righteous indignation he married her off to a drunken plumber when she would willingly have plucked out her lovely eyes if, by those means, her father might have been entreated. There is no darker blot on the Wesley escutcheon of those pilgrim cockleshells than her father's taunting of her after such a marriage with her strange change of opinion on the joys of wedlock. In her letter of reply breathes a true dignity and an infinite sadness: "You ask me what hurt matrimony has done me and whether I had always so frightful an idea of it as I have now. Home questions indeed! I had not always such notions of wedlock as now, but thought that where there was a mutual affection and desire of pleasing, something near an equality of mind and person, either earthly or heavenly wisdom, and anything to keep love warm between a young couple, there was a possibility of happiness in a married state, but where all or most of these were wanting I ever thought people could not marry without sinning against God and themselves."

The tragic young couple lived in London, and the fumes of William Wright's lead works in Soho stifled the life out of babies born to Hetty in this bleak contest. There is no sadder picture than that of the beautiful young mother leaning from her bed to watch death wipe the life away from the face of her

newly born child. As Hetty watched the baby die, her heart was twisted into poetry. An intolerable passion of despair seemed to wring the words from her. Here was no premeditated eighteenth-century elegance, but something straight from the heart. Old Sam Wesley's jingles were being refined by fire, and not far away now was the birth of new poetry. But first other Wesleys had to sing ere the Romantic Revival could be born.

William Wright, her illiterate, pot-house haunting husband, sat beside her. It was he who scrawled down the burning words on paper ere Hetty forgot them. That scrap of paper which was intended for Brother John Wesley's edification is an eloquent condemnation of the other poet of the Isle of Axholme, for it speaks for itself: "I've sen you sum verses that my wife maid of Dear Lamb. Let me hear from one or both of you as soon as you think convenient." Then with fumbling fingers he traces out the ill-spelled words with hands more used to drains than to the shy dawn of romantic poetry:

"Drooping sweetness! Verdant flower,
 Blooming, withering in an hour!
 Ere thy gentle breast sustains
 Latest, fiercest mortal pains,
 Hear a suppliant! Let me be
 Partner in thy destiny."

Hetty Wesley was enough her father's daughter to seek comfort in poetry, and when things became too

desperate she would serenade her impossible husband with verses in which his sins were commemorated. The epitaph which she wrote for herself is eloquent of what marriage to William Wright had involved for this daughter of the Muses:

“Destined while living to sustain
 An equal share of grief and pain:
 All various ills of human race
 Within this breast had once a place,
 Without complaint she learned to bear
 A living death, a long despair;
 Till hard oppressed by adverse fate,
 O’ercharged she sunk beneath its weight;
 And to this peaceful tomb retired,
 So much esteemed, so long desired.
 The painful mortal conflict’s o’er;
 A broken heart can bleed no more!”

The plight of Sister Mary was as sad as Hetty’s own. These two sisters had been devoted to each other in childhood almost in the same strange intimacy as of an Emily and an Anne Brontë. The one was the foil to the other, and when Hetty fell it was Mary only who stood by her in a devotion of loyalty which nothing could break. It would have been supposed that Mary would have escaped her father’s notice and his hasty decrees, but her time surely came. With small twisted body she was married to a large shambling charity school cleric who was the laughing-stock of the family. Even Mrs. Wesley

called him "poor starvling Johnny," and the Rector himself knew what a figure of fun he could look when he fell overboard in the swollen river at Wroote with his waving arms and legs. He could even raise a smile from Hetty amid the horrors of Soho, and it must have refreshed her to write to her brother John the letter she knew so well would make him also laugh; John had been kind to this same Johnny Whitelamb at Oxford, whither the Wesley family had contrived to send him. He had been taught Greek and Latin, and John Wesley had seen that he got a gown to drape round his shambling body. From the tone of Hetty's letter it seems that she is particularly edified by her brother's efforts for the good of Whitelamb's soul. Perhaps he had never been properly baptized and John had rectified this omission by sprinkling, for he was just then very particular about such weighty matters. In any case the large male infant gets a chuckle out of the unregenerate Hetty:

"Forasmuch as it seemeth good unto me to say something about the long male infant thou wast pleased to comfort our eyes withal, let me ask thee whether thou thinkest it lawful to send from under thy protection a plant of so fine a growth for thy fair sisters to rejoice at? What aileth thee, O Man, to expose to female view a sight that perhaps our latest moment can scarce eradicate? If I may follow the example of better writers and use a contradiction in terms, so visible a nothingness no countenance ever disclosed before. But to the rueful length of legs,

to say nothing of back, etc., for as Susie said the best that can be said of some things is to say nothing at all. But if such mighty matters might be said or conceived concerning length, what shall we say (for description's sake) concerning breadth? Why verily nothing neither, since nothing can come of nothing. Not to insinuate neither that this goodly flower is without a stalk, for I heard a sage matron affirm he was all stalk, and you forgot not to sprinkle him daily lest his want of growing might be laid to you.

"Thy affectionate friend and sister, I am pretty well as also is the husband of my bosom. Adieu."

In spite of the family's amusement the Rector of Epworth had discovered that this same Johnny Whitelamb could be very useful. It was he who was to fall heir to the mantle wrenched from Hetty's own shoulders. The Rector of Epworth had added the church of Wroote to his numerous cares, and there had sought to colonize his large family, as, at Wroote, food was more easily come by on the parsonage farm. Now another plan for *Job's* assistance came to him like an inspiration. He would marry Johnny Whitelamb to his daughter Mary and settle them at Wroote, for he knew that no other curate would live there, and he saw that it was quite the best way out for the cripple Mary and for *Job*, and so he ingenuously told the Lord Chancellor when he asked to transfer the living to Whitelamb: "It lies in our low levels and is often overflowed four or five years since I have had it and the people have lost most

or all the fruits of the earth—but they love the place though I can get nobody else to reside on it.”

So the little deformed Mary Wesley and the “long male infant” were married and took up their abode on the water-logged mud-flats of Wroote. The Rector of Epworth heaved a sigh of relief and thanked God for “being eased of four daughters out of seven, as I hope I shall be of the fifth in a little longer.” It was also a great source of satisfaction to know that Johnny Whitelamb would go on to the end of the chapter drawing maps and strange figures for the great work on Job “as well as we could by the light of nature.” Of course it was sad, but whatever else could God do but slay Mary in agony at the birth of her first baby? Even those dull asses, the parishioners whom Hetty deplored, had been scandalized by the quality of the little cripple’s sufferings then. They might be without imagination and they were well used to farm tragedies of birth and death, but this was something so terrible as to soften their dull hearts in heavenly pity. It comes as no surprise to learn, after such a display of the ignorance of biological fact, that the Rector of Epworth was the poorest of poor farmers. He never made a penny either out of Epworth or Wroote, and when his turn came to die, his creditors distrained on his stock to pay his debts. But as he said himself, he could “struggle with the world but not with Providence.”

In this bundle of inept arrogance and homely tragedy the life of John Wesley was bound up. He

knew every twist and turn of the road and was spared no detail of that strange home of his. He knew that his mother's cast-iron scheme of education had not prevented Hetty's destruction; he knew of all Emily's woes and now he must weep for Mary also. But in the midst of it all his mother maintained her poise. She had achieved the whole armor of the saint whose whole care is for the things of the spirit, and she would side-track the ache of loss by the pain of fresh heavenly endeavor. Her letters to her son John are full of the axioms of morality and the fight against the world, the flesh and the devil. She quite honestly confesses the way in which she has been able to save the absolute collapse of the mother's heart—a kind of desperate resignation to the will of God has been the secret she has learned in a long life with Samuel Wesley. As she says to John when she believes him to be already in a consumption: "But take your own way; I have already given you up as I have some before which once were very dear to me." That example of the Spartan mother was not to be lost on the leader of the revival of religion in England in the eighteenth century. Hers was the weapon which he himself would use to subdue the disappointments and the human love of his own heart, and though the weapon was to break in his hand it was not to be without significance in the way his feet must travel ere he learned a deeper secret yet.

VII

VARANASE

It is still a benediction to enter the village of Stanton. It lies in a cleft of the Cotswold Hills as they slope down to the plain. It is like a miniature Broadway, but unspoiled, and the old stone houses border the wide, quiet street even as they stood in the golden days when John Wesley rode down from Oxford. His friends used to call it "dear delightful Stanton" and thought of it almost as a place and as an experience at one and the same time. There was a quality about the hills, about the stone and the sunlight, and, above all, a richness and a zest in the company of friends which was wont to foregather there, for it was here in the old village of Stanton that grace and loveliness first dawned on the son of Epworth. Life lived with charm and at ease was a new revelation to that strenuously knit figure fresh from the molding of Susanna Wesley's unrelenting life of rule.

The atmosphere of Stanton Rectory was congenial. There was sunshine and laughter and also good food and good books. There, also, was dancing and the reading of plays and abundance of good conversation. Over a collared calf's head washed down by home-brewed cider the friends would make very merry. They chatted easily of the *Spectator* and the Court and fashion. They were frivolous over dogs and cats

with that lightness of touch which only comes when life has ceased to be so terribly earnest. It was a different world from Mary's agonies at Wroote and from the strain and penury of the Rectory at Epworth. In Stanton Rectory lived the glorious Kirkham family, and there came that pattern of a fine gentlewoman, Mrs. Pendarves, who was later to become Mrs. Delany, the friend of kings and queens. She lived in but the next village of Buckland and was a beloved friend to the vital Sally Kirkham. Both were famous for that awful quality of fire, and Mrs. Pendarves' raptures were notoriously adorable. They loved music and pictures and flowers and animals, and an expedition with them on those Cotswold Hills partook of something allied to the joys of Paradise. There was a convenient and rollicking brother, Bob Kirkham, and a younger, more unsatisfactory sister, Betty, who was prone to poke fun at John Wesley's solemnities. It was all a new world to the young student from Oxford, who would swing along on his horse with joy in his heart and a new, compelling attraction in his life. He began to spend just a little more money, and although there were protests by post from Epworth, John Wesley had crossed the floods and was now in the dear, delightful Land of Promise. Old Sam Wesley might storm as much as he desired on paper, but the light in Sally Kirkham's eyes was worth it all.

In the mode of the eighteenth century the circle of friends adopted nicknames which made John Wesley feel more at home than ever with these jolly

girls, for it allowed a sort of intimacy which stopped short of the familiarity of the bald Christian name. The modern Group knows no such reticence, but it suited young Wesley very well. People clearly could have more than one name, and Sally Kirkham figures as Sappho, Flavia, Deborah and Varanese in the letters of the circle. There seems no doubt but that Sappho and Varanese are both one and the same person, but it was that last lovely name that John Wesley always used when he wrote or spoke to Sally Kirkham. She seems to have carried him quite off his diminutive feet. The woman was literally sparkling. To hear her defend some friend or some loved cause was to be caught up in a glorious enthusiasm, for she had a very pretty wit and a racy style of talking. Her experiences lost nothing in the recounting of them with her good memory and her eye to see amusing side-play. She was still something of a tomboy, and as a girl she had run wild in the glorious out-of-doors of the Cotswold country. It is likely that she had the sonsy coloring of the brunette and that fire lurked in those Celtic eyes of the west country. She could take up the cudgels for someone dear to her so briskly that even the Bishop of Gloucester trembled. About her there was a go-ahead energy and a bright determination which were calculated to carry all before them.

Now Sally Kirkham was by way of being religious, but there was a subtle difference of atmosphere between the religion of Epworth and of Stanton. Stern Puritanism was the background of Susanna

and her daughters, but here there was a strange quality of ingenuous enthusiasm. Sally had a way of discovering everything for the first time herself. Thomas à Kempis had not written until she had read him in a translation, but from henceforth he was her hero and she was his apostle. She denounced "Holy Living and Dying" as wholeheartedly as she acclaimed the saintly Thomas, and refused to be "frightened out of her wits" by anyone whom she did not choose as her own particular teacher. It was all so old at Epworth. Low be it spoken, but Susanna called à Kempis "an honest weak man" when John wrote to ask his mother what she made of all these raptures. He always liked to refer to Epworth for the reasoned point of view, and it gave him a greater sense of security to feel he was consulting Susanna in the background. But all the same it was glory as of the first Eden when Sally Kirkham lent him à Kempis—if only in Stanhope's translation. He felt perhaps just a little ashamed of that, for his sisters would have read it in the original, but although he remembered that translation all his life he shot his mind on to the glory and got more out of a translation than anyone at Epworth would have believed possible.

Sally Kirkham found in John Wesley an apt pupil. True son of his mother, it was on the safe ground of theology that they foregathered. The friendship seems to have been cemented in that reading of à Kempis and in the resulting discussion. Together and in rapture they spoke of the Pattern for this

strange, pulsating life of man. Sally would have John Wesley live up to her enthusiastic standard of perfection and she would point the moral and adorn the tale in her letters to him to explain what he should make of himself. In the same way she adopted one Mrs. Elstob, the first of the blue-stockings, and forced her on even into royal favor. Sally's letter to the Queen was so eloquent then as to charm from kingly pockets a substantial pension. She would doubtless have done the same for John Wesley and must have produced upon him the bracing experience of optimism. With Sally Kirkham at his side surely he could conquer the world. It was difficult to keep one's reasonable head, and somewhere round the heart would come gusts of warmth in the sunshine of this generous and enthusiastic friendship. Varanese became a name to conjure with, a name to make reason totter, a name to bring tears to the eyes.

It must have felt like playing with fire, but John Wesley really began to wonder whether in seven years' time he might dream of an engagement. He dreamed of a man in the future who might conceivably be himself—a man of thirty years of age. It seemed more reasonable with so long a vista ahead, and well he knew that he would not have enough money until then. He was scandalously poor, and Brother Charles would soon be knocking on the doors of the University without a penny in his pocket. But to a man of Wesley's cautious strain it was all the more to be enjoyed when the prospect was so far ahead, and meanwhile in the beauty of dear de-

lightful Stanton "he would think of it." Life has suddenly become exciting, and it was glorious to work at religion like Thomas à Kempis, to keep a diary, to work and to play really hard. Oxford was but thirty-six miles from Stanton, and the ride was altogether delightful with the welcome Varanese would give him as he rode up to her garden gate and reined in his horse. The friendship was withal so theological that the son of Susanna Wesley blossomed out into a shy springtime. He became excellent company in Stanton Rectory as his own sisters had always found him in the hard work and poverty of life at Epworth. But now all was like heaven, and the beauty of that Cotswold country almost unbearable. To walk those hills with Varanese, to discuss everything in heaven and earth and to see her kindle to the great and glorious in life was enough to turn the head even of Susanna Wesley's own son.

It was typical of John Wesley to set his reasoning powers to work to devise, after all, something of a short cut from that shy springtime of the heart to the glories of full summer. At the beginning of the year 1725 he was definitely thinking of ordination as a means to an end. He wrote home about it, and his letters up to a point were quite honest. He asked his father if one might enter the Church "to eat a piece of bread," and old Sam Wesley was inclined to agree, but as usual he was thinking first of the Rector of Epworth and not of young men's hearts in springtime. He thought it much better that John should devote himself to looking up cross-

references for *Job's* edification and to helping on with the Hebrew. Ordination might come later or might even be left to take care of itself. The young lover was destined to get more encouragement from his mother, knowing as she did only half the tale. She wondered what the lad could be reasoning about now and what could be at the back of his mind. She had dedicated Samuel, her first-born, to the Church, but not so his brother John. He had been free to choose and she had not thought that he was heading that way. Now she rejoiced at this unexpected turn of events and wrote eagerly to push him on in the good way, for she feared lest he should reason himself out of it before he was well launched. She knew her John. Also she knew his father and the demands of the preposterous *Job*, and dreaded the by-paths of secular learning when so glorious a vineyard as the Church lay just there for the entering. If the lad could now be pushed gently towards that desired goal all would be well. *Job* should not be allowed to wreck the boy's career if at Epworth they were bound to put up with his demands upon their time and patience. So Susanna writes to the young man at Oxford to encourage him towards ordination, and in her letter she roundly tells him "it is an unhappiness peculiar to our family that your father and I never think alike on anything."

So between Oxford and Epworth the letters went backwards and forwards, but it was only Sister Emily who knew that behind the hotly disputed question of John's ordination stood the vital figure of Sally

Kirkham. She was devoted to this young brother of hers and knew him as well as his mother, but she also knew his shy blossoming and his reasonable calculation of days and years. So into the post-bag with the Epworth letters she slipped in one of her own for the purpose of quickening his too reasonable feet. It was a letter almost Brontë-esque in its vehemence and its knowledge of love. She brushed aside that idea of waiting until he is thirty years old before he moves in such a matter with urgent warnings of danger. She had suffered too fiercely herself and dreaded lest John should come to suffer as she had done. So the words burn across the paper and read with a pressing sense of urgency: "Whether you will be engaged before thirty or not I cannot determine; but if my advice is worth listening to, never engage your affections before your worldly affairs are in such a posture that you may marry very soon. The contrary practice has proved very pernicious to our family; and were I to live my time over again and had the same experience I have now, were it for the best man in England I would not wait one year. I know you are a young man encompassed with difficulties that has passed through many hardships already and probably must through many more before you are easy in the world, but believe me if ever you come to suffer the torment of a hopeless love all other afflictions will seem small in comparison of it."

Now young John Wesley had gone out of town on April 10, 1725, and he had ridden down to Stanton. Emily's letter was dated April 7, and

whether it hastened his flight from Oxford or whether it followed him to Stanton, it gave him food for much troubled thought. He had never before been so alarmed. He had not contemplated the possibility that women could move so swiftly as that. Why, here was staid Emily Wesley saying she would not wait one year for the best man in England, and he had intended keeping Sally Kirkham waiting seven long years for him. That letter was destined to survive many years after both John Wesley and Sally Kirkham were dust, and it must have brought to him the urgency of panic in that peaceful, lovely village of Stanton in the Cotswold hills. There had been pleasant days in the country and in Varanese's own arbor, and there had been talk of à Kempis and the Way of Life, but by April 20 the diary shows the sign of urgent emotion and the secret mark of Varanese. There follows a scarcely audible prayer: "May it not be in vain." The date of April 20 was branded on the young man's memory for years afterwards. He would commemorate it in his diary as "saw Varanese," and then the veil of silence is drawn upon that momentous day of spring in the year 1725. April airs were abroad, but it was also the time of the first mocking cuckoo's song. It is impossible to know what took place and how the face of that smiling countryside was changed for the young man in the course of one interview. But from all the evidence available it looks as though he had sustained a great shock. For all his haste and in spite of Emily's promptings, John Wesley had come too

late. Sally Kirkham would marry the village schoolmaster, Jack Chapon, before the year was out.

What was said? None knows, none ever will know, but it all seemed bound up with a breaking heart and much thought of à Kempis and the struggle of life and of discipline. The incident and the place and Varanese made an indelible mark on Wesley's mind, and the secret diary took it down never to be forgotten. But when the ordination day came it made no sort of stir at all. It befell in the September of that fatal year of 1725, and Wesley lost his temper badly on the day and disputed over a trifle. On the Thursday of that week, his mother's day, he wrote to Varanese. She must have been kind, and he was heroically getting her into perspective by thinking of her on his mother's day. The staid friendship should go on and he would go to her wedding and dance there, perhaps with tears in his eyes. But he would never be the same man again, and Varanese would hold a place in his heart different from all his other friends. He would write to her for the whole of ten years afterwards, and he would treasure her letters as one of the beautiful things in his life and speak of them wistfully as "those last monuments of the goodness of my dear Varanese."

That year of 1725, which had begun with such high hopes, ended in a relentless manner with the little deacon in the bosom of Mother Church and the radiant Sally in the arms of Jack Chapon. After the wedding and the song and the dance were over John Wesley returned to Oxford deep in meditation.

He would always go back to the Faithful City when the world was unkind, and he came to love the very sight of Oxford. Now in his lonely bachelor rooms he sat himself down and entered up his diary. There followed a long and an eloquent pause. . . . There was deep quiet in the little room, for it was the moment between the closing of one chapter of life and the opening of another. His mind was busy going over all the old ground. Christchurch dreamed about him as he sat deep in thought and as he tried to worry out from the heartbreak some sort of rhyme or reason. What question would his mother have asked him could she know how he was suffering then? He was Susanna's own son as he drew a line of finality in his diary and asked himself as searching a question as ever his mother could have done: "Have I loved women or company more than God?" It was ever Susanna's way to clear up a situation by means of these searching questions, and it was only right that her son should take her own medicine for the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. He meant to make the most of the mistress which did remain to him, and his devotion to the Church should grow from that hour. He was broken and bruised, but the blessed life of method and the cloister remained. Varanese was lost, but she had given him the way of salvation in the example of à Kempis, and his mother had shown him at Epworth how to be in the world but not of it.

It was an uphill journey, but John Wesley did not lack courage and he was inured to iron discipline.

If he had only known it, that Varanese experience was to be of lasting importance to himself and to the world. It was necessary that the one who was to be the pioneer in the discovery of the love of God should pass just this way of defeated human love. It was the quality of that lad's love which was to prove the important thing. It was essential that John Wesley should have come to know it and to baptize à Kempis in that very essence. It was a love of shy adoration, of April laughter and of April tears. It was a love so pure and virgin that it could contemplate waiting for seven long years in willing service ere the consummation of bliss. It was the only love that, without irreverence, could be transferred to God Himself.

That was, in fact, just what John Wesley managed to do, if his sister Emily's testimony may be accepted. She read the lad like an open book, and saw the significance for his spiritual life and for his whole career in the loss of his dear Varanese. She might take her place in Harley Street today with her cool reading of the young priest's mind: "Had you not lost your dear Mrs. C——n, where had your love been fixed? On heaven, I hope, principally; but a large share, too, had been hers: you would not have been so spiritualized, but something of this lower world would have had its part in your heart, wise as you are; but being deprived of her there went all hope of worldly happiness: and now the mind, which is an active principle, losing its aim here, has fixed on its Maker for happiness. This will ever be the

end that all rational beings will aim at, and when disappointed of one thing will soon fix on another."

NOTE ON VARANESE

The Editor of Wesley's *Journal* gives Betty Kirkham as Varanese (I, 15), but by Vol. VIII, 255, he allows Sally Kirkham to have been the formative influence in Wesley's life. Vulliamy follows *Journal* I, 15. Sappho and Varanese seem both to have referred to Sally Kirkham. Anne Granville never speaks of Varanese to John Wesley, but always of Sappho. Mrs. Pendarves and John Wesley mention her as Varanese, but evidently mean the same well-known correspondent who was noted for her letter-writing powers. Mrs. Pendarves, writing to her sister, mentions Sally and John Wesley almost in a breath as members of this correspondence circle: "I have not heard from Sally a good while. I am indebted to Cyrus, but will write to him as soon as I can" (*Corres.*, I, 285). Betty Kirkham married a Mr. Wilson (Tyerman) and died soon. In 1732 Mrs. Pendarves writes to her sister: "Poor Mrs. Wilson! I am sorry for the shock her death must have given Sally, whose tenderness must sometimes take the place of her wisdom. . . . Pray has Mrs. Wilson left any children?" (*Corres.* 360.) Now John Wesley is still writing to Varanese in 1735-37, and Charles Wesley sees her at Stanton in 1737, so she could not be Betty Kirkham who died in 1732. In 1731 both Varanese and Sappho had a child born to them; but Mrs. Pendarves is asking in 1732 if Mrs. Wilson left any children. The Granvilles were godmothers to this child of "our valuable Sappho," and John Wesley is well up in all the same news, and writes in that year to Mrs. Pendarves telling her what Varanese thought of when the baby was born (J. W., *Letters*, I, 97).

Emily Wesley's evidence is valuable because she had John Wesley's confidence: "Had you not lost your dear Mrs. C——n" (Stev. 271), which is the way he was accustomed to speak of both Varanese and Sappho: he speaks of conversation with our dear Sappho and "the uninterrupted conversation of dear Varanese" (*Letters*, I, 88) both in this year 1731 when on a visit to Stanton. The mistake seems to have arisen from Bob Kirkham's letter with a picture of Betty falling on her knees so that Wes-

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ley might know how pious she was becoming, but in the same letter in contrast to this folly comes the message that he goes to read a *Spectator* to his sister Chapon. This Betty Kirkham was described by Mrs. Pendarves as "a sister who had given more woe than happiness" to Sally Chapon, but Varanese always shines as a goddess in the letters of the circle.

VIII

RETREAT

IT was idle to deny that John Wesley had received a severe shock. He seemed to stagger back from life itself under the loss of this, his first love. The brand plucked from the burning might be true in this case also, but the experience had taken the very heart out of him. For the time being he had lost his ambition of being the Lord's Trophy. He retreated to the bosom of his own family at least equipped to be his father's curate. His devotion to his new calling can be gauged from the fact that he did not proceed to Priest's Orders until three years had elapsed since his ordination as Deacon.

He must have hoped for balm to his wounded spirit in the feminine atmosphere of his home, but he was soon to discover that old Sam Wesley was really no sort of a rest cure for frayed nerves. The crestfallen lover could think of no happier subject than love itself to argue about with that virile old father of his. The recent tragedy of Hetty loomed large on the family horizon, and the old man was still behaving like a lunatic if anyone had the hardihood to mention her name. There was bound to be a clash between father and son, for the reasonable, argumentative John was the same as the child Jacky who had so exasperated his father with his exquisite

reasons in those old days in Epworth Rectory. Now they met on more equal terms as scholars and twin souls in the Church, and John had even tried his hand at poetry. His wise mother had put her foot down there with strict orders that only as a diversion must he pursue that dangerous way, so instead he gave himself to sermon-making, which in her eyes was a much better business. But the mischief of it was that mother and son must make the sermons together and almost drive the Rector mad with jealousy.

John's heart was tender with memories of spring evenings at Stanton, and he could almost see it was possible to lose one's head when love called the tune. He had himself come within measurable distance of that passion which could kindle in the children of Samuel and Susanna Wesley. Even he, the child of his mother's cloistered days, had been frightened by its stirrings, so that it was no miracle that in Hetty it should burst into flame. She had come into the world at the peak of her father's poetic raptures, and even Susanna, with her blessed routine and her methods of education, was no match for Samuel's children born on Parnassus. So it came about that John, in love's springtime, felt he understood Sister Hetty perhaps better than father, mother or shrewd Sister Emily. He dreamed of Divine love and Christian charity and read of love's power to cover a multitude of sins. Of course it had all to go into one of those brand-new sermons of his, and proudly he showed his manuscript to Susanna. His mother went straight to the thought at the back of his mind, as was her

way with him, and she told him, "You writ this sermon for Hetty; the rest was brought in for the sake of the last paragraph."

The Rector of Epworth was furious when the sermon was preached. He at once put the cap on his own tyrant head and found that it fitted to a nicety. He was "inconceivably exasperated" against this erring daughter and never spoke of her save with the "utmost detestation." Indeed, his family rejoiced when she was brought to bed before the old man could get to her in her agony to tell her just what he thought of her conduct. So the intimate letter had run, "My father has been at Louth to see Sister Wright, who by good providence was brought to bed two days before he got thither, which perhaps might prevent his saying what he otherwise might have said to her; for none that deserves the name of a man would say anything to grieve a woman in a condition where grief is often present death to them."

On such a delicate situation and upon such thin ice John Wesley trampled gaily with the gait of an elephant. His words seemed so reasonable and good to himself that there seemed no reason that they should not be acceptable to his father. He really believed, in the assurance of youth, that he had done some good by his discourse on Christian charity, for he says with a flourish, "I had the same day the pleasure of observing that my father the same day when one Will Atkins was mentioned did not speak so warmly nor largely against him as usual." The situation of father and son must have appeared com-

plicated even to the resourceful Susanna, but it remained for her youngest son Charles to rush in where angels feared to tread. To him the Rector opened his angry heart—did not Charles hear how John always contradicted him? Did he not see how he sided with Hetty against him? And then in a burst of uncontrollable anger the secret was out, although he tried to recall the word but half spoken, "Nay, he disputes with me preach—" The old man's spleen was twisting still round that unfortunate sermon on the Love of God. John was pronounced undutiful and defiant, and the calmness of his general walk and conduct his father attributed to impertinence. He was never ready to give a hand with the family incubus, that preposterous *Job*, but would go his own way in quiet friendship with his mother and sisters and never once ask after the fate of the patriarch. Charles Wesley could scarcely believe his brother could really be just as wicked as all that. It made the young man weep tears to think of the children's sins being so visited upon the heads of the fathers of the race. He took John for an evening stroll in the country and gave him a piece of his mind. It is the first record of the eruption of Charles Wesley, but it was not to be the last by any means. He was to constitute himself the wayside volcano of John's journey through life. He was really a true splinter from the old block, and understood his father and spoke his language. He knew just that proper swelling pride when his father exhorted him to beat the waves beneath him and bid

them know that they carried "Charles" to pre-eminence in a golden future.

It was in the Parsonage at Wroote that the reconciliation of the injured parent and the undutiful son took place. Brother Charles catapulted John to the feet of his father to ask forgiveness for he knew not what. It was incredibly exciting to Charles to see the two weeping on each other's necks and to know that he, Charles, had brought it all about. He might not be the brand plucked from the burning, but he could hatch out a pretty little plot and watch a glorious explosion from the safe distance of the garden path. John promised with tears to help with *Job*, and right sharply he was kept to his promise. Old Sam Wesley kissed the prodigal and damned him with faint praise in one and the same breath, for he said he believed son John was really "good at bottom."

So much for a young man's sermon on the love of God. Incomprehensibly, it appeared to be weighted with combustible matter, and John found greater peace and safety with Sister Emily in the garden and about the farm at Wroote. He made his sisters a summerhouse in the garden in pitiful imitation of the Varanese arbor, and there he read to his sisters Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. He flew at logs and sawed them vigorously, gaining from the clean sanity of honest wood some sort of poise and satisfaction. He made benches in the summerhouse and decorated that part of the garden with flowers and ferns which he gathered with his sisters from the countryside. He went to every fair in the neighborhood, and per-

haps brought back those fairings for the bonny brown hair of his sisters, for he had some little money and had now nothing for which he wished to save it. He, in any case, left money behind him when he finally went from Wroote, although he thought it wise not to tell his father so. Money in that Parsonage had a way of enriching the destitute *Job* and not of adorning the beautiful daughters of old Sam Wesley. The boys swam in the river and went snipe-shooting, and John enjoyed the freedom of life at Wroote much better than the life at Epworth. But most of all he was thankful for the love of mother and of sisters, and glad to have a woman like Emily there with him to whom he could tell the sorrows of his heart. After that letter which she had written to him, telling him of her own hard hap, all barriers were down between them. She must have heard all about April 20 and of the loss of Varanese, and after his return to Oxford she was not at all surprised at the more religious turn which was obvious in his career at the University. Well she knew the imperious makeshifts of the empty heart. She had as few illusions about John Wesley's dawning ecclesiastical raptures as Susanna had about her poetical husband. She takes her stand with D. H. Lawrence, who, from the eminence of a Teacher's Certificate, tells the world all there is to know of love and of religion in his "The young man has lost his young wife so calls his love the Holy Ghost." Emily Wesley took the mind of her young brother into her cool fingers and so analyzed his later religious enthusiasms. The

world had much to say of his resulting efforts to convert Oxford, and his famous Holy Club became the laughing-stock of the University. It was all supposed to resemble primitive Christianity and to constitute a desperate fight for holiness, but the modern miss at Epworth shook her head and knew so much, much better.

It is an illuminating picture, that of the eighteenth-century girl shaking her wise head and so diagnosing John Wesley's trouble: "Herein, you yourself speak as one that is guilty: had you not lost your dear Mrs. C——n where had your love been fixed?" It is one of the "ifs" of history, but the world has cause for thankfulness that ever an insignificant person lived who bore the name of Jack Chapon. He struggled for preferment with the help of his wife's friend, Mrs. Delany; he tried to keep school in a house too big for him; he was constantly in debt and tried various devices in various towns to carve a way to fame, but the best thing he ever did, of which, of course, he was blissfully unconscious, was to save the great revival of religion by merely existing. It must have been saved but by the turn of a head, or a tone of voice, or perchance by the light and color of an eye. In any case there was something just significant enough for Varanese to pass over the modest little leaden casket which was John Wesley and choose instead the glitter of Jack Chapon. It is most likely that the great transaction was settled only by inches. John Wesley was really very small, and, after all, what would you have a fine young woman like Sally

RETREAT

Kirkham do but seek out a mate of respectable standing? Mrs. Delany laughed at little people, and among his fine friends Wesley himself was painfully conscious of his few inches. He speaks to his mother of "my being little and weak," but by the time that letter was written two years had separated him from the harshness of Sally Kirkham's refusal and he was able to add: "I can readily trace the wisdom and mercy of Providence in allotting me these imperfections." Had it not been so there might have been no Holy Club and no desperate fight for heaven by means of good works. Rather, in some other part of the country there might have arisen another Epworth Rectory with its harassing domestic cares and its inevitable ending of a beautiful dream.

IX

ASPASIA

JOHN WESLEY was called back to Oxford by the authorities. He was Fellow of Lincoln College and had duties to fulfil, whether his heart were empty or no. He had been forced to get the vital figure of Sally Chapon into some sort of perspective, but he was to find that this lower world had a way of dying but slowly. There often befell so teasing a mingling of events as to make the upward path very difficult.

Soon after Wesley's return death took a hand and plunged the young man back again amid all his old friends. There was one tragic Sunday of sermons and journeys and the news that Robin Griffiths of Broadway was dead. He was a friend of the ladies at Stanton, and John Wesley was called on to preach the funeral sermon. He struggled on as best he could with Sally Chapon sitting there just in front of him, and people asked him for that sermon afterwards because somehow it was shot through with reality. It reads coldly in print, but it was delivered in an atmosphere that was tense with emotion. John Wesley was certainly finding this life of sermon-making uphill work, with human life breaking in on his reasons and his periods to lay all in a tangle at his feet. Just a few pews away sat Varanese, and with

her that glorious friend Mrs. Pendarves, and an iron band of restraint must be upon the young man's heart and he must not indulge in perilous sentiment over Robin Griffiths. So reads his upright and down-right tribute to his friend's memory: "Let it suffice to have paid my last duty to him—by saying in a few plain words such as were his own and were always agreeable to him, that he was to his parents an affectionate, dutiful son, to his acquaintance an ingenuous, cheerful, good-natured companion, and to me a well-trying, sincere friend."

At the close Sally claimed the preacher as escort, and over the hills to Stanton that strange couple journeyed. It was no longer spring in the Cotswolds nor in Wesley's heart, but he carried his precious companion safely to her husband looking as white as the corpse he had just buried. He was suffering from the prostration of nervous exhaustion in an attack of sickness with which he was to become familiar. These tingling personal contacts, coupled with his heroic cleaving to his Maker, were always sure to bring on John Wesley the same sickness and distress. He always notes it as a mysterious prompting of Providence, but it sprang directly from his own propensity for burying his head in the sand. He had an extraordinary way of blinding himself to the obvious, and his iron restraint and disregard of internal wounds was bound to take its toll of human nerves. He was ever on his guard, and his body groaned involuntarily under that terrible repression. He had a way of trying to walk through hell without

so much as acknowledging that painful locality. He could only seek safety in devising a fire-proof equipment, so that the flames might leave him unscathed. All would be well could he but keep the joints of that harness sealed. He had all sorts of safety devices, and would evolve many more. Already before Sally Kirkham's wedding he had resolved to fast once a month and once a day to read over the last week's resolutions. He would get out of bed at five in the morning and never let sleep or company hinder him from going to prayers. Presently Charles Wesley and Bob Kirkham would come to his help in a Holy Club of their devising, but on which John seized with joy as just the very thing he was searching for as a protection against all fire risks. In his hands it was to become a thing of terror, until young Morgan went mad with the name of Wesley on his lunatic lips.

But life was hard for young men in springtime in that lovely Cotswold country, and Wesley came to dread a new attack on his susceptible heart. Come it surely did, and in an overwhelming lady of elegance and charm beyond anything a son of Epworth had seen. (Mrs. Pendarves) was an old friend of Sally Kirkham's, and she came on a visit to Stanton to mend her own heart over the default of Lord Baltimore. She found John Wesley quite amusing for a season. He contrived to keep her at arm's length as best he could in a correspondence of stilted style and under the protection of a pen-name. He was Cyrus to her Aspasia. But under all the camouflage the

letters of Wesley show the pattern of growing intensity. He writes with tears in his eyes, and is alarmed again at that strange emotion creeping along his heartstrings. He fears he is again laying himself open to a hell of suffering, but on he must go. He tells her all that the correspondence of Varanese has meant to him, and seems to feel that he could spend all his life in this gentle art of letter-writing did not God demand of him an account of his stewardship of time: "Should I neglect the work to which Providence so plainly calls me even in hope of such a good?" His heart burnt within him just to read Aspasia's written word, and he felt a strange dislike of coarse masculine society when he dreamed of his lovely lady: "The more I observe the dispositions of those poor creatures that make up the bulk of mankind the more do I desire to shelter myself from them under the protection of Varanese and Aspasia."

Of course Wesley was frightened, and protection was essential to him. Never again did he wish to suffer as he had done in that old month of April, and all the time he is begging Aspasia for her friendship he is sheltering behind his guardian angel Varanese: "While I am reflecting on this I can't but often observe with pleasure the great resemblance between the emotion I then feel and that with which my heart frequently overflowed, in the beginning of my intercourse with our dear Varanese. Yet is there a sort of soft melancholy mixed with it when I perceive that I am making another avenue for grief, that I am laying open another part of my soul at

which the arrows of fortune may enter. Nay, but here will I hold: since the Christian name for fortune is providence or the hand of God, should it wound me even in the person of my friend there would be goodness in the severity." Time went on leaden wings when the goddess did not write, in spite of his pious determination to accept the will of God. In his monk's cell in Lincoln College he had a consuming passion to receive her letters, and he dreamed of her in the moonlight. And truly she was very beautiful. Aspasia had that irresistible hair which glistens, and in moonlight or in golden sunshine she would be clothed in glory. One who knew and loved this Aspasia drew this pen-portrait of her: "She had a most lovely face of great sweetness set off with a head of fair hair shining and naturally curled, with a complexion which nothing could outdo or equal, in which, to speak in the language of poets, 'the lilies and the roses contended for the mastery.' Her eyes were bright—indeed I never could tell what color they were of—dove's eyes—she is almost the only woman I ever saw whose lips were scarlet, their bloom beyond expression. Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, but terrible as an army with banners." This came from a dean's pen, but a statesman said no less. Edmund Burke's tribute in the ear of Fanny Burney is as convincing: "She was the model of a perfect fine woman." Her charm of manner, which Wesley would fain attribute to an innate goodness, was not produced in a day. It was an inheritance from a long line of aristocratic ancestors who had

come to learn how to treat their fellow men. Aspasia was related to that Sir Richard Grenville of the epic of "The Revenge," and to that other gallant knight of Landsdown who fell in battle for his King. Service and Command were both part of her rich inheritance.

The goddess appears to have collected sermons as others of baser metal pursue old china or cigarette cards. Her friendship with John Wesley was cemented over a sermon. It was balm to the son of Epworth for Aspasia to ask for his sermon notes. She seemed to think much more highly of them than his father did. She knew just how to talk to the budding priest after his efforts in Stanton pulpit, and together the friends would converse in Sally's Arbor and on the hillside with that strange light drawing the gold from the old stone houses below and shining in that wonderful hair there close at hand. Even when she was not there and he was traversing the same ground with dear Varanese, now much married, he would remember everything she said and everything she did just there: "On this spot she sat"; "Along this path she walked"; "Here she showed that lovely instance of condescension." John Wesley told himself he wasn't really playing with fire, he was really looking for protection from this daughter of the gods, yet anyone who has been in like case can see exactly where he was heading when he let his mind play tricks like that.

Mrs. Pendarves had all the added attraction of a tragic figure. She had been sacrificed in an appall-

ingly unsuitable marriage at the age of eighteen, and one day had awakened to find her husband dead at her side behind the curtains of their four-posted bed of horror. Some degree of the tragedy of such a marriage may be guessed at from the fact that death, choking the lungs of her spouse, sounded no whit unusual to the girl at his side, for she was too accustomed to the stentorian breathing of this drunken husband of hers. She never knew he was dead until she pulled the curtains back and the morning light revealed her grim bed-fellow. Aspasia was old in experience. She knew her way around a dangerous corner quite commendably. She had no sort of idea of "love and a knapsack," and Wesley was as poor as a church mouse. (She was interested to think of the little man sitting shivering in his College rooms without a fire, and found him something of an oddity against her background of good food and drink and dresses at thirteen shillings a yard. She called him "Primitive Christianity" behind his back, and when she was away from him speedily forgot all about him.)

Aspasia went to Ireland in 1731, and John Wesley waited in vain for a letter that never came. She rejoiced in the more congenial men friends whom she acquired on the other side of the water, and wished she only had such a circle in England. Dean Swift speedily filled her horizon, and Dr. Delany, whom she afterwards married, made his appearance. Life with the Dean of St. Patrick's was altogether more exciting than a theological friendship with little "Primitive Christianity" complete in blinkers. Swift

pinched her and corrected her English and wrote letters to her which she really coveted. Her tone here is altogether different from Cyrus' beloved epistles, and it looks as though she considered his only in the ruck of the more ordinary letters which she received. Writing to Swift in 1733 Aspasia says: "If I were writing to a common correspondent I should now make a fine flourish to excuse myself for not sooner answering the favor of your letter; but I must deal plainly with you, sir, and tell you (now do not be angry) that the fear of tiring you stopped my hand. I value your correspondence so highly that I think of every way that may preserve it." Now in many of her letters to John Wesley she makes just that flourish to excuse herself for not answering his letters. She protests too much a constant want of time, but will not hurt his feelings if flourishes will avail anything: "I have but a moment's time, and I cannot employ it better than in answering Cyrus, though I doubtless appear unworthy of the favor he shows me, that Aspasia has been more unfortunate than ungrateful. The true reason I have not wrote has been my incapacity of doing it. A great weakness I had in my eyes, and the fear of its returning if I strained them too soon has been the only reason of my silence. I have received all your letters and have been infinitely obliged by them." John Wesley never got a letter out of her, tired eyes or not, all the time she was in Ireland. It was only when she returned to England and found a languid moment that she put pen to paper to restart the flow of those earnest

Cyrus letters. But it was too late. After all, the man had a fine pride tucked away about his little person. He used to pray God to help him conquer his pride, but it stood him in good stead against the flourishes of the Aspasia of this world: "Doubtless you acted upon cool reflection; you declined the trouble of writing not because it was a trouble, but because it was a needless one. And if so, what injury have you done yourself? As for me, you could do me no injury by your silence. It did indeed deprive me of much pleasure and of a pleasure from which I ought to have received much improvement. But still, as it was one I had no title to but your goodness, to withdraw it was no injustice. I sincerely thank you for what is past, and may the God of my salvation return it sevenfold into your bosom." The curtain was down on Aspasia and up on the Holy Club.

Cheeks where blew the apple blossom and lips where cherries ripen might very easily wreck the career in time and in eternity of the Brand plucked from the burning. Wesley had told himself that he was but creeping into the protection of these glorious women by setting up for himself the dear home intimacies which he missed in monastic Oxford, but well he knew that this strange warmth round the heart could portend nothing but danger.

Today Stanton Vicarage has been rebuilt and the arbor of Varanese is no more, but the place of Aspasia's sojourn stands as it stood in Wesley's day. It is there at Buckland, but a few miles from Stanton, that the very spirit of that old eighteenth-century

friendship can be recaptured. There stands the old church and the glorious old manor house on the side of the hill. There is the long wide terrace where the friends must have walked and discussed, perchance, the nature of a sacrament. There is the old stone wall with the door in it leading from the manor house to the church. How often must Aspasia have passed that way to her place in the squire's pew? How often must she have raised her lovely eyes to the little serious man in the old pulpit and made mental notes of his sermon to discuss it the better with him afterwards? Their ghosts have fled, and the modern villager responds neither to the names of Pendarves, Delany or Wesley, but the old stone remains in a setting of Cotswold beauty which can never be forgotten. It was one part of John Wesley's life, and the loveliness and the heart-warming there were to be important to him as an experience in itself. Ten years and more were to pass over his diminutive head before he learned that to feel a warmth round the heart for God meant the revival of religion in England.

X

THE HOLY CLUB

THE system of self-examination and good works in the Holy Club at Oxford was so arranged as to leave no room for the flesh. Every odd moment was filled with prayer, or at least with ejaculatory prayer. Every hour the members must take their bearings and probe into the state of their souls with that sudden switching on to the God of their salvation. The modern Oxford Group is merely child's play to Wesley's holy endeavors. There was "deep sharing" to the purpose and an inquisition into each other's walk and conduct that only a man with the hide of a rhinoceros could have suffered without going out of his mind. It was no wonder that William Morgan, one of the most promising members, went stark, staring mad. With John Wesley in this mood of relentless piety, suicide, to this young man, must have seemed the only way of escape. In his frenzy he babbled all the time of Wesley and literally died of excess of holiness.

The manner of William Morgan's death might have given pause to a less determined man, but with an other-worldliness that is almost shocking, Wesley embraced Morgan's younger brother and urged him also on to the same celestial slaughter. A love of dogs and of sport mercifully saved this boy, or the

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old father in Ireland might have had to mourn for both his sons. Young Morgan had the good sense to approach John Wesley, enthroned as President of the Holy Club, leading a very beautiful greyhound by the collar. This was partaking of the nature of sin, but it sufficed to keep one's balance in the orgies of holiness. The picture which this young man gives of the saints is edifying. John Wesley set the pace, and the laughter and tears of the circle show a state of things bordering on the hysterical. The breaking point could not be far to seek according to the young man with his hand on the greyhound's collar. He says: "They imagine they cannot be saved if they do not spend every hour, nay minute, of their lives in the service of God—they almost starve themselves in order to be able to relieve the poor and buy books for their conversion. They endeavor to reform notorious whores and allay spirits in haunted houses. They fast two days in the week, which has emaciated them to that degree that they are a frightful sight—they are become the jest of the whole University; they often cry for five minutes for their sins, then lift up their heads and eyes and return God thanks for the great mercies He has showed them in granting them such repentance, and then laugh immoderately as if they were mad." It is as though the young man were watching some strange play from the stalls of a theater. He sees every action and every movement of the actors, but he is not, himself, one of them, and knows not all that lies behind this desperate struggle for holiness. Only one thing he

knows, at the beginning of his University career, and that is, that for him escape is imperative. He concludes his letter home with the urgent message: "I think it incumbent upon me to inform you that it is my opinion that if I am continued under Mr. Wesley I shall be ruined." The owner of the lovely greyhound, free of inhibitions and on tiptoe for excitement and glorious life, could only consider those first Oxford Methodists as lunatics. He had not come by way of Epworth Rectory and burning nurseries nor by way of a broken heart in the arbor of Varanese. He had not felt a burning heart turn to ashes or climbed the hill of difficulty and renunciation. It was a terrible struggle this of St. Paul's warfare with the body of this death, for it hung too tightly round the neck of young manhood to be resisted without blood.

In the midst of this desperate fight for holiness at Oxford a bombshell was dexterously dropped by Samuel Wesley Junior. This young man was a poet like his father, but not quite so penurious a one. He was a great help to the family financially, and carried weight with his younger brothers. He was happily married to a nut-brown maid who bore the charming name of Berry, and after leaving a trailing cloud of innocents behind him under the stones of the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, he had migrated to Blundell's School at Tiverton in Devon. Those who walk over the worn stones of the cloisters at Westminster will see looking up at them the strange name of a little girl called "Nutty." It is a queer

little bit of romance left behind by Samuel Wesley Junior and his nut-brown maid, and is a flash of poetry from gray stone. This young man had been boy and master at Westminster School, and he had a way of rising to the surface and putting an oar into the family waters at inappropriate moments. He had upset Emily's love affair with Leyburne, his wife had quarrelled with Charles Wesley, and now John's turn had surely come. He told the leader of the Holy Club roundly just what he should do—he must return to Epworth and there take up his father's work and fall heir to his priestly office when death should claim the Island Poet. The prospect was uninviting, but, to Samuel Wesley Junior, it shone in light from his own imagination. It was fitting and dutiful in a son, if that son happened to be some other one than Samuel Wesley Junior, for the truth was that it was this same eldest son that his father had first asked to join him at Epworth.

Age had shaken the Rector by the hand, and he had got into one of those panics of scholarship that foretold death ere the *magnum opus* could be completed. With one hand paralyzed and greatly crippled in body he toiled on with *Job*.^N When he could not write with one hand he used the other or called aloud for the faithful Susanna, who in spite of all she had suffered could still write without pain. He longed to finish *Job* before he died, and he believed if Son Samuel joined him there might be hope. He loved this dutiful son, and the prospect was alluring. He was much better suited to his taste than the

upright and downright John, for as Samuel Junior himself confessed of his father: "I have lived longer with him than you and have been very intimate and yet have almost always pleased him, and am confident I shall do so to the end of my life." It is as well he said "almost always," for he must have remembered his mother's love of truth, and no one could really live "always" with the Rector of Epworth and give entire satisfaction. There was a kind of devil of disquiet in the little man which wise Emily had called that "unaccountable love of discord." It was to the eldest son that his old father described the idyllic scene at Epworth. The dovecote was new and shining in the sun. It makes a delightful picture with the rebuilt parsonage barn. Against two sides of the house are fruit trees with a harvest of plums and cherries, and even mulberries can grow at Epworth Rectory. What the old man particularly enthused over was "in the adjoining croft, walnuts," but what he really meant was—in the adjoining study, *Job*.

Son Samuel was not allured by any of the pictures conjured up in his father's letter, and wrote off to John Wesley to drive him to the rescue as a much more fitting sacrifice for Juggernaut wheels. With naive blindness Samuel urges upon his brother the fact that his ordination vows involved a cure of souls and not the work of an academy. John Wesley seems not to have retaliated with the obvious remark that physicians should cure themselves, for Samuel himself was in scholastic work, safe in the west of

England, and in a very good job in spite of ordination vows. There was a blind spot somewhere in most of the Wesleys, and John was too overwhelmed by the prospect of Epworth, viewed from the fastnesses of Oxford, to think of so logical a reply. He seems rather to have fallen back on something which savors of the prig rather than the logician: "The question is not whether I could do more good there or here, but whether I could do more good to myself, seeing wherever I can be most holy myself there I can promote holiness in others. But I improve myself more at Oxford than at any other place." Obviously both *Job* and the family fortunes could go hang if only John Wesley could preserve his precious holiness. To a man, toiling in rowing on his voyage to heaven, the thought of Epworth floods, even interspersed with mulberries and walnuts, was an anticlimax. John Wesley dare not relax his holy endeavors, for his soul stood in jeopardy every hour. If he had to return to the old home he gave himself up for lost. Even his mother took but half-heartedly to his priestly arrogance, and he had never seen her angry in his life before that day when she had flushed up in a sort of smothered rage and told him plainly she would not be spoken to like that by a mere boy. It was not likely that he could look forward to sweeping either father, mother or Sister Emily into the charmed circle of his disciples. The thought of staging the Holy Club in Epworth Rectory was a thing not to be entertained for a moment. He had not quite lost his sense of reality as to forget that his

own family would inevitably and always get him beaten. It might be good for his father's soul to confess his sins and wail for forgiveness, but it was not a likely thing to happen, and least of all in the presence of Son John.

But the seed had been dropped, and Wesley's mind began to take hold on and to play round the idea of a cure of souls. In spite of a rigid holiness and a cruel bodily discipline, his mind retained its life-long character of susceptibility. It might be the way of salvation after all—this cure of souls—for already the Holy Club was cracking under the terrible strain. Like Arthur's Round Table it was to be betrayed in its own bosom, for the Holy Club of Oxford Methodists was to strike on that same rock as did those other knights of the Holy Grail, that same old submerged rock of human nature. One of its members, named Hall, not only stooped to matrimony, but jilted one of Wesley's own sisters in order to marry another of them. Kezia's blood always afterwards seemed to cry from the ground of the Holy Club, for, true to romantic tradition, she was destined to seek an early grave. Martha Wesley got little by her conquest, as in addition to a large family of her own she was called upon to nurse the children of her husband's concubine. Well for her that she was another of Susanna's children of the cloister period, for she seemed to exhibit among all horrors a preternatural calm.

The Wesley brothers were thunderstruck. They flew to poetry, and nearly died with chagrin to find

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that Hall had but used the methods of Divine guidance to determine which sister he should marry. Had they not taught him so to do? He had received a revelation that it must be Martha, and who were they to fly in the face of Providence? But the reasonable John was not so sure of that sort of guidance, and found out a very neat bit of work by Johnny Whitelamb which must have materially assisted Divine revelation. This young cleric had felt called upon to tell Hall exactly what he thought of Kezia Wesley, because she had been so bitter an opponent of his own deplorable marriage. Hall's ardor for Kezia cooled, and Martha dawned on his enraptured sight.

John Wesley hastened to London to try and clear up the tangle of love and guidance, and walked straight into a messenger of God on Ludgate Hill, for there he met a man who asked him to go to Georgia to convert all the Indians of America. It looked very much like Divine intervention, and certainly it was a way of escape from a difficult situation, for Georgia looked, in the distance, a paradise free from earthly entanglements. Here in England the enemy would keep coming in as a flood in spite of rules and short sleep and scant food, or even in face of no food at all. There in Georgia were the unspoiled children of nature and the Noble Savage of eighteenth-century tradition. There John Wesley could hope to navigate all to heaven by his rules and his lovely Holy Club methods. There could be no Delilahs and a bankrupt civilization, but hope and

SON TO SUSANNA

new life and a glorious family of tenderfeet in the ways of sin. It was a proposal likely to appeal to Susanna Wesley herself, with her art of child instruction and her passionate admiration for the Danish Missionaries. To her son John the prospect was rosy indeed. He was to discover in reality a world of rape and murder and sin only glimpsed at on this side of the water, but when he embarked for America his heart was light in his breast. He had cut his losses, and set out on the voyage to Georgia as one who seeks a better country, that is, an heavenly. The good ship *Simmonds* was to John Wesley a dream ship of hope, but ere he entered into her he was suffered first to go and bury his father.

XI

UNCLE MATTHEW

THERE was time before the death of the Rector of Epworth for the ghost of his old life to pay him one last visit. One day it took flesh upon itself and walked straight into his shabby home. Samuel Wesley received a visit from his brother Matthew and lived to read the letter which Matthew wrote to him after that memorable reunion. That there was truth in the epistle could not be gainsaid, and the effect that it had upon the Rector was to make him stand quite still in the fastness of his study—thinking. He confesses himself that he restrained himself from his usual trick of “flouncing and bouncing,” and in truth his vanity had received a knockdown blow. The mischief of it was that the man was such an incorrigible Dissenter, and to think that he could teach the Rector of Epworth anything was going really a little too far. It took time that day to recover one’s self-esteem, but gradually the pleasing and well-known sensation returned to warm his heart. After all, he was a great poet, and if only he could introduce *Job* to royal favor he would show them, as he had always done before, just how wonderful Samuel Wesley really was. Had he not had sons at Westminster, Charterhouse and Oxford? Was he not the God-given thorn in the flesh of

Dissent wherever and whenever he met it? He would return the Parthian shot, but, in doing so, he betrayed himself by the very title he adopted as his *nom de plume*—he would be “John o’ Styles” to plain Matthew Wesley, apothecary. Of course he had always been just that, with a flourish into the bargain, but the reply weakens and quavers away before the rugged Puritanism of his brother’s accusation. Matthew had said some very terrible things and had not tried to spare his brother’s poetic and susceptible soul. He had cut right across those dispensations of Providence, beloved of the Rector’s heart, and had roundly told him that “in pursuit of his pleasure he had produced a numerous offspring,” and moreover to the famous champion of orthodoxy he had dared to say that he found him worse than any infidel.

To the unregenerate comes a sense of joy that ever Matthew Wesley could say just those things to the Rector of Epworth, for only so rarely does a prophet arise to speak the things burning in the heart of the people. It was a glorious summing up against the Champion of Orthodoxy, and it read like this: “You have a numerous offspring; you have had a long time a plentiful estate, great and generous benefactions, and have made no provision for those of your own house who can have nothing in view at your exit but distress. This I think a black account, let the case be folly or vanity or ungovernable appetites. I hope Providence has restored you again to give you time to settle this balance, which shocks me to think of.

To this end I must advise you to be frequent in your perusal of Father Beveridge on Repentance and Dr. Tillotson on Restitution; for it is not saying 'Lord! Lord!' will bring us to the Kingdom of Heaven, but doing justice to all our fellow creatures, and not a Poetical imagination that we do so." It is clear that Matthew Wesley knew very well what he was talking about and that well he knew this brother of his. He was not at all impressed with his borrowed feathers from the breast of Mother Church, but confronted him with a rugged and unashamed Puritan honesty unadorned with frills or feathers. The doctor Matthew had come to Epworth after presiding at Hetty's bed of affliction. He was shocked with what he had left and what he had found at the end of his journey. Hetty Wesley had been his pride when as a beautiful girl she had lived with him in London. He had had her poems printed for her in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and had gloried in her wonderful promise. Now he had had to deliver her in anguish time and time again because Sam Wesley had forced upon her that hideous union with a drunken plumber. It was not for nothing that when Matthew Wesley came to die it was his doctor's hand that Hetty best remembered. He died on her bosom, and she was melted into poetry and wept tears again at his loss. The adjective which slips into her memorial verses is a strange one and only understood against that background of the brutal paws of that drunken husband of her bosom, William Wright. It is the

"lenient hand" of this dear doctor that Hetty would sing in her sad lines.

If Matthew Wesley was shocked at that one transaction of Hetty's marriage he was staggered by the poverty he found at Epworth. What thoughts must have raced through his stern old Puritan mind as he ducked his head to say grace for that stricken female household! With chivalrous reticence he refrained from questioning the mother of the Wesleys, but the girls told him all, and more. He was the uncle of romance to them, and treated them to glorious meals at a hearty eighteenth-century hostelry and finally carried off Patty to the comfort of his own London home. He asked this favor of his sister-in-law one morning ere old Sam Wesley was out of bed, for he seems not to have trusted himself to speak of the children before their father. Mrs. Wesley noted his conduct with mild interest, not seeming to grasp that burning indignation of the doctor and the uncle of Hetty Wright. In her letter to her son, John Wesley, in 1731, Susanna says: "He was strangely scandalized at the poverty of our furniture and much more at the meanness of the children's habit. He always talked more freely with your sisters of our circumstances than to me; and told them he wondered what his brother had done with his income, for 'twas visible he had not spent it in furnishing his house or clothing his family. He was very shy of speaking anything relating to the children before your father, or indeed of any other matter. He always behaved himself

very decently at family prayers, and in your father's absence said grace for us before and after meat."

This letter must have given John pause among his apostolic ardors at Oxford. He was no lover of Dissent himself and would rather have liked to have converted Uncle Matthew to his dear Holy Club had it not seemed so hard a proposition. Sister Martha thought he might attempt it, and yet almost the last thing the old man did on this side the grave was to chuckle at Nephew John's ecclesiastical pretensions. But if the future could then have been foretold, this doctor uncle was to carry more weight with John Wesley than ever John o' Styles could have done, for somewhere bound up in his little person was a great deal of his Uncle Matthew. The years were to come when Wesley would show a strange mingling of the doctor and the priest. It would fall to his lot to travel miles every year to snatch those on the verge of hell to safety with his lenient hand, and with that doctor's hand he would pour them the wine of life as they knelt at his feet round the broken body of his Saviour. With deep mastery he would minister to minds diseased and bring health and life again from the grave. But the time was not yet. He was still stiff and puctilious in his priestly duties, and had not learned his cure of souls so well as Uncle Matthew had learned his healing ministry.

It was on the 25th of April, 1735, that Samuel Wesley died. John Wesley was thankful to have such a satisfactory occupation, in his father's death-chamber, as the reading of the Commendatory Prayer.

Through that bedroom of Samuel and Susanna Wesley the voice of the young priest echoed as he read out the words which would sound so differently to old and to young ears: "O Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of just men made perfect, after they are delivered from their earthly prisons; we humbly commend the soul of this Thy servant our dear father into Thy hands, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour; most humbly beseeching Thee that it may be precious in Thy sight. Wash it, we pray Thee, in the blood of that immaculate Lamb that was slain to take away the sins of the world, that whatsoever defilements it may have contracted in the midst of this miserable and naughty world through the lusts of the flesh, or the wiles of Satan, being purged and done away it may be presented pure and without spot before Thee."

Miserable and naughty enough! But death closes all. There must have been a certain satisfaction for the President of the Holy Club thus to administer the last rites of the Church to old Sam Wesley. After the Reformation this prayer had taken the place of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, and the one-time Dissenter must have been thankful to make his exit in so laudable and so Churchlike a manner. Did he really enjoy that prayer, or was it his last stab at Son John when he remarked after his best priestly effort, "Now you have done all." He had found his son's ecclesiastical pretensions irksome, and the Dissenter in him had rebelled at the young man's assurance

about the mysteries of God. He had once turned John Wesley out of the house for less than this. But now on his death-bed he must suffer whatever was said or done, and it only remained to gather up his feet and die when John Wesley read that prayer for the second time.

The sun was setting in the Isle of Axholme as the Rector of Epworth slipped away to his great reward. In heaven he was confident he would be at least appreciated. He had said he would appear in glory with all the children God had given him, but now they were gathered round him in that shabby bedroom watching his last agony. He had given Emily a word, for her Puritan ruggedness had irked him as much as John's High Church Doctrine. To that clear-sighted girl who had criticized the poor poet so ruthlessly he said: "Do not be concerned at my death; God will then begin to manifest Himself to my family." But unto Charles he saith: "Be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom. You shall see it though I shall not," and then he laid his hand in love upon the young man's head. Of course Charles Wesley was thrilled. He felt he must shoulder a plank in the wreck of the family fortunes, and although he was ignorant what he could do, he struck an attitude and was sure that he must do something. In reality he presently sailed away to Georgia, and it was Sister Emily who shouldered the responsibility of the Mother of the Wesleys. Son Samuel was far away at Tiverton, but Charles sent him word of that memorable death-bed and spoke of

his father's gameness to the very end of his life: "The fear of death he had entirely conquered, and at last gave up his latest human desires of finishing *Job*, paying his debts and seeing you."

Susanna was calm when the end came. She had fought too long a rear-guard action to be anything else. She looked beyond the pitiful old corpse to those bright days when the world was young and love of Christ had been born in love of Samuel Wesley. In those far-off days the connection had not seemed incongruous. The Divine Master and the earthly one had claimed her allegiance at one and the same time, and somehow were mutually responsible the one for the other. It had fallen to her lot to have to try to square the real and the ideal, and in that terrible contest she was not defeated. She could never have gone through all that she had done had she not believed it was God's way for her. She had told them that she would always stick to their father whatever befell. Life with Samuel Wesley might mean crucifixion, but there remained the inner life with the Saviour of mankind. She had plumbed the depths of "dying and behold we live," and life and death no longer held any terror for her. She was only thankful that the old man had had so easy a death, for she could never bear to see him really suffer. So calmly now she bade farewell to the boys about to set out on their great missionary venture to America. Without a penny in the world and with the creditors already distraining on her poor hens and chickens, she stood up like any Spartan

mother and set her two sons forward on their great crusade. With a superb courage and a fine idealism she rallied the faint-hearted with her ringing challenge: "Had I twenty sons I should rejoice if they were all so employed."

It only remained to get *Job* planted at the feet of the third sovereign whom Samuel Wesley had wooed for preferment. In that direction it could now do the Rector of Epworth little good as he was even now rustling round heavenly mansions in ghostly cassock. He had received his ultimate preferment and had been wont, while on earth, to glimpse Samuel Wesley in these highest altitudes. He would shine with his children in a constellation of stars or cut in before the saints in light to welcome an old friend into these everlasting habitations. He could see himself making a special commotion over the entrance of his friend the Archbishop of York. He rejoiced to direct him to an ethereal seat in the orchestra stalls. In heaven he would be relieved from the necessity of begging from him and could now turn the tables of benevolence. There was an end of debtor's prisons, and the wicked world would forever cease from troubling.

But *Job* tarried still in this vale of tears, and the stricken family at Epworth looked upon it as a pious duty to get the patriarch at least introduced to royal favor. It had been such an incubus on the whole family, and had grown to an enormous volume which seemed to have consumed their fortune and battered on their penury. It was in keeping with

the irony of life that John Wesley himself should have to stagger to London with the volume and seek out the Queen to lay the treasure at her feet. Between its covers were shut ten years of his father's boisterous life. What storms, what curses and what vituperation had gone to the making of its many pages! Mary had died that her husband might illustrate its pages, Son Samuel had wearied his friends with importunity for their subscriptions, and even Pope and Swift had been pressed into that same service. John Wesley had wept at Wroote over the patriarch and his own slackness in filial devotion, and Susanna must have well-nigh fainted at the very name of Job. But now it was all over and the great work was to be launched on an enraptured world.

Even John Wesley, who was not easily surprised, was rather taken aback at the nonchalance of the Queen when she received the treasure. She was playing with her maids of honor when the little man and his huge burden were shown into her presence. She gave him naught but smiles, and then dealt the son of Epworth the unkindest cut of all in her arch remark "that it was prettily bound." In one moment she returned to her play, and John Wesley had to contrive to walk backwards out of her presence with thoughts of life and death racing through his mind. He must have been glad to turn to his great American crusade and to his preparations for departure from so sophisticated an England.

There was more appreciation and a feeling of importance among his friends in Little College Street,

Westminster, where the brothers Wesley made their final preparations for their new venture in life. The dream of Oxford was over. Life was now to begin in real earnest. Something of glamor and something of heroism wrapped about the little house near the Abbey and clothed the old stone steps at Westminster as the brothers took boat to fall down river. It was a sailing to the unknown, a leap in the dark, a glorious flinging away of life. So rings John Wesley's challenge as he rallied his companions for the great adventure: "Fast and pray; and then send me word whether you dare go with me to the Indians."

In the safe days of Walpole's rule, with his sleeping dogs and peace at any price, it partook rather of the spirit of Captain Scott and his glorious company in our own safe days before the Great War. And so young Charles Delamotte found it, who must surely rank as the first to discover the hero in John Wesley. He would follow him to the ends of the earth, and his mother might plead with him in vain. He was deaf and blind to anyone save to that little handsome missionary with the beautiful clear-cut face and the light of high adventure in his eye. Mrs. Delamotte was furious with John Wesley for taking her son away from her, but what could she do with a man who, somewhere tucked away mysteriously about him, carried that indefinable thing called charm?

XII

SHIP'S COMPANY

IF John Wesley felt that he had cut his losses and got rid of the Old Man of the Sea when he planted *Job* at the feet of his sovereign, he was woefully ignorant of life and human nature. He was in reality shipping all the old difficulties upon the *Simmonds* when he piped Charles Wesley aboard. The story of Samuel and Susanna Wesley was to be re-acted with new scenery and with a different curtain-raiser, but the bonds of the old couple were not to be severed in death. John and Charles Wesley would fight their way through life very much in the characters of their respective parents. There would follow startling results for the world, but there seemed little prospect of peace for the late President of the Holy Club.

Charles Wesley was his father's understudy. He flew into verse at the least provocation. He "flounced and bounced" and knew so much better than anyone else what was good for them. He pursued the sinners on board the *Simmonds* with as little discretion as his father had denounced the Dissenters of his parish. John, on the other hand, was more like his mother. He had a way of putting her old childhood's teaching into practice. Did these same sinners say handsomely that they had sinned, then he would welcome them

to the family table of the Lord. The brothers argued all the way across the Atlantic. John writes Charles down as "perverse." Rarely can he report that they are "at one." So Susanna had always found it with her Rector when "it is an unhappiness peculiar to our family that your father and I never think alike on anything."

In that eighteenth-century frigate was staged all Sheridan's *School for Scandal* and all of *What Happened in the Inn at Upton*. General Oglethorpe was the leader of this strange company of colonists to the brave new world of Georgia. He had to control disappointed failures from England, persecuted Germans, neurotic women and mothers of families along with a gaol delivery of discharged debtors. It was an unlikely looking army with which to establish England's far-flung battle-line. He little dreamed that the Wesley brothers were to constitute his main liability, as he had hoped for strength from that quarter. The General knew Uncle Matthew Wesley, and though he was rather brutal in his honesty he knew he was the kind of dour individual to do his duty. He must have been taken aback at Matthew's estimate of his own nephews, for he seems to have received the General's overtures with unseemly mirth. The High Church Wesleys stuck badly in the old Dissenter's throat. Oglethorpe himself was so angry that he decided, out of hand, to take the brothers Wesley to spite the old man, but he was in blissful ignorance that the solemn couple had packed up their precious Holy Club at Oxford but to embark it on

the good ship *Simmonds*. They were to find more lively material here for their pious raptures than ever they had found in their monastic cells at Oxford. Before, they had only known good women, now they were to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Welch and Mrs. Hawkins. On that tedious sea voyage of weeks these women of the world found an exquisite escape from boredom in leading the brothers Wesley up the garden path, or what did duty for the garden path on board the good ship *Simmonds*. They were "open" to words of exhortation. They were "convinced," or in the language of the Groups of a later day, they had "come through." It got exciting when Mrs. Hawkins wept and said her mother had prophesied that she should never want a friend, and now God had sent John Wesley to her. With a heart still tender with memories of Varanese and Aspasia, he melted at the very name of friendship. He had "close conversation" with the lady, and read to her *Sinner's Complaint to God*. He always read aloud to his sisters, and Varanese had spent many an hour with him in the old arbor reading. They were fond of the *Song of the Hebrew Children*, and believed in Henry Wootton's advice of passing away time with a religious book or friend. But here was a different proposition with close conversation in stuffy cabins, and floods of water sometimes necessitating a change of bunks for the ladies. General Oglethorpe chivalrously carried them to his own cabin, and John Wesley cheerfully slept on the floor. Mrs. Welch was near her time and very ill, but nothing daunted the

heroic John. Had he not befriended Varanese? Had she not told him her experience in that hour of mortal agony? She had said that she felt like rushing into Stanton's quiet street to bid the first sinner she met fear that God "who is able to inflict sharper pains than these." It seems to have been much in the little man's mind with Mrs. Welch, and he would sit beside her as though she had been Varanese, and he would comfort her. He read and talked, and when Mrs. Welch seemed "at the point of death" he administered to her the Sacrament. There must have been much of Uncle Matthew about him then, for she recovered from that hour. In the same role he made gruel for the rest of the sick on board, and worked away for hours at this kindly toil. It was a fast day of the Holy Club, and he had been up early, and noted almost at the beginning of the day that he was "very hungry." But doctors of souls and bodies must live like that. There must have been a pleasing sense of satisfaction in so real a mortifying of the flesh as the little priest delivered his steaming bowls of gruel with that persistent and pronounced aching void within his own body. In his pocket, as some little recompense, lay à Kempis of the old pensive memories. So would John Wesley follow the Pattern. So would he tread in the steps of renunciation.

The most wonderful experience of the whole voyage was the storm that caught the ship on Sunday, January 25, 1736. The Wesley brothers were really frightened. There seemed so little to separate them

from the wrathful judgment of God in this cockleshell of a boat with its straining timbers. The only thing they could do, with that fear at the heart, was to sit close in their little Holy Club between-decks. But the most extraordinary thing was the behavior of the Moravians, those much persecuted Germans, on board. They sang hymns to God amid the whistling of the wind and the snapping of spars, and even their women and children looked death in the face without fear. The members of the English Church did nothing but scream although they had the advantage of an irreproachable Apostolic Succession and moreover held correct views on Baptism. It was a tremendous puzzle to the reasonable John. He kept stealing off to the Moravians and asking them searching questions. He learned German to talk the better with them, and was introduced to their hymnbook. He marveled at their courage, and asked in awe, "Were you not afraid to die?" Their strange hymns assaulted his tender heart. They were so wistful, so human and so real. They were almost love songs. John Wesley would translate them into English, and find them such heady stuff as to explode the rigid propriety of the religion of his Holy Club:

"Father, Thine everlasting grace

Our scanty thought surpasses far;

Thy heart still melts with tenderness,

Thy arms of love still open are

Returning sinners to receive

That mercy they may taste and live.

SHIP'S COMPANY

Though waves and storms go o'er my head,
Though strength and health and friends be gone,
Though joys be withered all and dead,
Though every comfort be withdrawn,
On this my steadfast soul relies—
Father, Thy mercy never dies!"

It was medicine for his own broken heart, and he was never to get away from that wistful tenderness of the Moravians whose very hymns were born in persecution and exile. He marveled that men could do all the meanest duties on shipboard as though they did the Lord service, for with him religion was not a thing that carried the devotee, but was rather a terrible exaction of rule and a burden of rite which only the strongest could shoulder. It creaked in its running for all Susanna's training, and as she had created her discipline as a shield against the onslaughts of the body, so John conceived that religion had little to do with love. It was the priest's shield and buckler against that very emotion. These Moravian Christians were a strange contradiction to John Wesley of the High Church. Their form of religion, in spite of himself, would keep appealing to that susceptible heart of his. He felt himself back in a primitive Christianity which was warm and real and differed so painfully from the effort and the strain of his own Holy Club. These Moravians could be little better than Dissenters, and surely no good thing could come out of Nazareth, and yet he was not so blinded by his own stiff opinions to miss a glimpse

of beauty there. He saw them consecrate one of their bishops whom, of course, he could not bring himself to believe was a bishop at all, and yet he felt he had joined hands across the centuries with the first Apostles: "The great simplicity as well as solemnity of the whole almost made me forget the seventeen hundred years between and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not, but Paul the tent-maker and Peter the fisherman presided yet with demonstration of the Spirit and of power." It sunk deep with John Wesley, and he tucked it away somewhere about his little person for use in years to come when he would understand all better than now he did. The time would come when he would rediscover tent-maker and fisherman and build them into the very fabric of the Church of Christ.

Meanwhile there was much work to be done. The ship's company landed in America on Friday, the 6th of February, 1736, and General Oglethorpe and Wesley scrambled ashore and sought a place where the ground was a little ascending—to give thanks to Almighty God. There were camps to make and axes to wield, and the General was constantly demanding Wesley's services for the quality of their business-like and methodical attack and his disinterested care of a vital water supply. Wesley seems to have admired that leader Oglethorpe and marked his power of conduct. He thought him God-inspired when he sent down a midwife to Mrs. Welch and achieved the miraculous in that she was in time for her bringing to bed. John Wesley himself sat close just outside

the door of the hut, and awaited his turn for ghostly consolation. His mind was strangely full of Varanese and her pious mortifications at such a time, but the jests of the unregenerate within the birth-chamber jarred upon his sensitive and highly strung mind. He bemoans himself in the pages of his more responsive diary: "On this occasion I received a fresh proof how little extraordinary providences avail those who are not moved by the ordinary means. Many burials and some deaths I have been present at, but I never yet knew a soul converted by the sight of either. This is the second time I have been witness—there being only a door between us—of one of the deepest distresses which life affords. The groans of the sick person had very short intermission. And how were they filled up by the assistants? With strong cries to God? With counselling her that was encompassed with sorrows of death to trust in Him? With exhortations to each other to fear Him who is able to inflict sharper pains than these? No; but with laughing and jesting, at no time convenient, but at this least of all. Verily, if they hear not Moses and the Prophets even the thunder of His power they will not understand."

Wesley felt a stranger in a strange land. He had enjoyed that first thrill of landing with Oglethorpe and the startling look of the beautiful trees of the new land blooming as at summer-time. But now he felt a very long way away from the learned seriousness of Epworth or the wholesome gentleness of Varanese. Her words kept ringing in his head,

"Sharper pains than these," and they brought before him that peaceful English street at Stanton where Varanese would fain have warned the sinner. That she could have endured the agony of childbirth in the sustained atmosphere of the Holy Club must have appeared to him most commendable when compared with the ribaldry within. Was he going to be able to rebuild on these hostile shores the perfection of his own Oxford religion? He came just a little nearer doubting it, for it is an instinctive shielding of his own inadequacy that gesture of throwing the blame on the sinner: "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets." He might have added, if they hear not the cries of a woman in childbirth they will very likely pay no heed to a young man named John Wesley. There is evidence that his self-confidence was shaken at the very beginning of his new life in America. He sought out a friend among the Moravians to ask advice, and received in exchange a challenge. Direct to the point went Spangenberg with his questions, to which Wesley then could find no answer: "Do you know yourself?" "Do you know Jesus Christ?"

XIII

FEARFUL SAINTS

THE exploits of the Rector of Epworth in his little corner of Lincolnshire pale altogether before those of his son Charles in America. On landing, General Oglethorpe had taken Charles Wesley to Frederica and left John behind at Savannah. To the General's confusion he was thus to make the discovery that one brother differed from another brother both in glory and common sense. They were, in fact, as different from one another as that old couple on the Epworth flats—those original protagonists—Samuel and Susanna. Charles Wesley had come to America in some bitterness of spirit, and had groaned under much of the discipline of his brother on the voyage. Now he had escaped to Frederica and had left John behind at Savannah so that he could be his own man again. If the parishioners of Epworth would gladly have done some mischief to the old Rector, the people of Frederica would gladly have blown out the brains of his youngest son. He seems to have hopped about like some perky sprite of mischief with a finger in everyone's business. He insisted on public prayers and a strict observance of the Sabbath in a new colony fighting for its existence on none too friendly a soil.

There was great trouble with Dr. Hawkins, who

was husband to the neurotic lady of the voyage. This man had the temerity to fire off a gun in the middle of Charles Wesley's best sermon, and made the little priest so angry that he had the doctor shut up in prison for the rest of the day. Now if God worked according to the measure of Charles Wesley's mind no harm could have come from remembering the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, but unfortunately the Almighty did not observe His own day of rest, and it was on that very Sunday that a wretched woman miscarried. The accident would not have happened could the doctor have been present, but he was in prison where Charles Wesley had thrust him. It again appeared that only in quiet Stanton could babies be born according to the rules of the Holy Club. Life and passion would keep breaking through. Mrs. Hawkins was herself so infuriated as to snatch up a gun and discharge it so near the head of the priest of Frederica as to frighten him out of a week's growth.

Oglethorpe, in his turn, was furious when he heard of the prison episode. He gave Charles Wesley such a piece of his mind as to set the little priest wondering what sins he could discover in his turn to discredit this his angry chief. He was secretary to Oglethorpe, but had no heart for the business, and after six days of writing letters and of routine grind he requested for himself that he might die. He could write strings of texts in his *Journal* and put down long conversations there if he chanced to be the star part, but he could get no sort of inspiration from the soldier

Oglethorpe. Where John felt that generous reaction of the Englishman who must needs love all captains of ships and all leaders of forlorn hopes, Charles must indulge in jealousy and the spite of hurt pride. He meant to shine yet, and soon fate would play into his hands.

Upon Oglethorpe rested the whole success of this Georgian venture of colonization. He had shouldered the white man's burden and the responsibility of Empire and had been prepared to face it with this ill-assorted crowd of refugees and home failures. The Spaniards were a real danger, and were only just across the river from the land claimed by England. Oglethorpe passed each day fearing a sudden attack from them and the instant wiping out of his little flock by the enemy. Every sound and every bonfire set his nerves on edge and made him fear that the end had come. Now to be set up with Charles Wesley as his secretary was a refinement of cruelty, for the man had no aptitude for the rough and tumble of life in a new colony. His irresponsibility and rashness might explode a mine at any moment under Oglethorpe's feet. He did in fact nearly cause a mutiny by his habit of collecting all the dangerous gossip of the new colony. His one constructive idea was to hold constant services and to call his sweating parishioners together by beat of drum. He was jealous of the manly activity of the camp which went on apart from himself, and loved those moments when the spotlight was turned on him and when he could roll the drum and make even Oglethorpe obey

him. To the plain soldier it seemed like fiddling when Rome was burning. He called it all so much vain repetition, and thus describes the prayers which Charles Wesley thought so lovely: "No love, no meekness, no true religion among the people, but instead of that formal prayers."

One evening the soldier and the priest stood side by side watching the parishioners creep like snails unwillingly to obey the drummer's call. With innate perkiness Charles Wesley turned to his commanding officer with the remark: "You see, sir, they do not lay too great a stress on forms." To which, quick as lightning, came the retort: "The reason of that is because others idolize them." After a grunt from the soldier prayers began and the priest got even with him in the lesson, in which he delighted to answer Oglethorpe back from the protection of his cassock by rolling this sweet morsel under his tongue: "Be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." It looked very much as though General Oglethorpe would endure neither sound doctrine nor any other sort of Charles Wesley's doctrine very much longer. The priest seemed to get on the nerves of the soldier in an incomprehensible way, and there was no peace possible between them. One night Oglethorpe had to leave the settlement to investigate the Spanish menace to the safety of his infant colony. He literally took his life in his hand. He was strangely strung up in his preparations, and when

they brought him the wrong sword he was very angry, for he took it as an omen of disaster. He wanted to sling him with his father's sword as a protection and as an emblem of success, but the mistake was twice repeated. Nervy and jumpy, he waited for the right sword, and then, buckling it on, he turned to Charles Wesley with this word of explanation: "With this sword I was never yet unsuccessful." The ubiquitous little priest had been watching the whole scene with quotations bursting his heart, and answered like a shot from a gun: "I hope, sir, that you carry with you a better, even the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." To which it is almost incredible to report that the soldier's only reply was "I hope so, too." Charles Wesley got so excited that he ran off into the woods and then suddenly popped out on the bank of the river to see the last of Oglethorpe's boat and to get some more perilous stuff off his poetical bosom. The soldiers and sailors, thinking he ran with some important message, stopped the boat, so could hear quite nicely the Sprite's parting shot shouted to them in mid-stream: "*Christo duce, et auspice Christo!*" It really was not to be wondered at that when Charles Wesley wanted to borrow a teakettle from Oglethorpe he got the answer that there was no issue to be made to him. And again, when he bobbed up among the soldiers on guard "in expectation of an enemy," the wrath of Oglethorpe blew him through the West Indies and back by Panama. In his *Journal* he says, "I stayed as long as I could, however unsafe within the wind of such

commotion, but at last the hurricane of his passion drove me away."

Charles Wesley turned to the women. There was nothing else to be done, for he seemed always to get left behind with the weaklings of the camp. The women might appreciate him and at least could compass a cup of tea. They achieved even more than that. They fooled him to the top of his bent. No Malvolio could have fallen more neatly into Maria's plot than did Charles Wesley into the snares of Mrs. Hawkins and Mrs. Welch. They seemed to conspire together to compass his downfall. If he wanted converts he should have them with the modern Group's love of confession thrown in. The little priest's eyes must have goggled in horror when they told him that they had both committed adultery with no less a man than Oglethorpe himself. He was blissfully ignorant that the plotters had told very much the same tale to Oglethorpe, but with varying dramatic personae. They had told the soldier to keep an eye on the priest because of his adultery with Mrs. Welch. So were the threads tangled and confused, and the wicked lies let loose to do their worst in that distracted young outpost of Empire. All Charles Wesley's righteous indignation and hurt pride rose against Oglethorpe. He had never liked the way that soldier had carried Mrs. Welch into his own bunk when the sea had washed her out of her cabin on the *Simmonds*. This, then, was the meaning of all those quarrels which Brother John was always trying to compose between these women. He pitied his poor brother's simplicity.

FEARFUL SAINTS

Let him come and reclaim his converts and re-establish his Holy Club. Let him come to Frederica and try his hand at life-changing. And so John Wesley came, and his *Journal* reads like some distracted Oxford group:

Monday, April 12th, 1736

Mrs. Welch open!

Resolved to change.

Oglethorpe friendly, soft.

Oglethorpe came out of the house very angry with her.

Tuesday, April 13th

Mrs. Hawkins civil.

Mr. Welch open and affected.

Mrs. Welch soft, open and affected.

Oglethorpe at Prayers.

Mrs. Hawkins at Prayers—she open, mild.

Oglethorpe soft, open.

O God in Thy Light let us see light.

Wednesday, 14th April

Mrs. Hawkins came to me at Mrs. Welch's.

God will reveal all.

Friday, 16th April

News of the Spaniards coming.

Mrs. Welch and Mrs. Hawkins came to me in the field.

Oglethorpe seemed quite open and in an excitable temper.

Mrs. Hawkins and Oglethorpe seem innocent!
Amen!

Mrs. Welch in a swoon.

Open my eyes.

In spite of this prayer for guidance things continued pretty lively until Oglethorpe thought it expedient to take a hand himself. He opened the attack on Charles Wesley without any of the paraphernalia of "a quiet time." One night in his own tent he bade Charles sit down, and so addressed him: "Pray, sir, sit down, I have something to say to you. I hear that you have spread reports about me and Mrs. Hawkins. In this you are the author of them. There is a great difference in telling such things to another and to me. In you who told it your brother 'tis scandal, in him who repeated it to me it is friendship. My religion does not, like the Pharisees, consist in long prayers, but in forgiving injuries as I do this of yours."

There is something finely magnanimous about this upright and downright soldier. He towers above poor white-faced Charles Wesley and looks right through him. The only significance the little priest can claim is against this background of the large tolerance of this man of the world. To him Charles Wesley was a fool, and up to that time he had believed him to be a vicious fool, but John's visit had convinced him of Charles Wesley's innocence. John Wesley had gone straight to Oglethorpe and had told him the whole ugly story which he had heard from Brother Charles, and so put the key of the mystery into the hands of the soldier. To honest John he

pronounced "the thing in itself a trifle. 'Tis not such things as these that hurt my character—they would pass for gallantries and rather recommend me to the world." But because John Wesley had believed the story, Oglethorpe took the trouble to convince him of its falsehood and to explain the danger of the Spaniards and the precarious position of the new colony. He had a regard for John Wesley, but none at all for poor frightened Charles, who could not come himself to ask the truth of the rumors, but must pile mischief upon mischief until Oglethorpe himself believed Charles Wesley to be a consummate knave. He had indeed decided to expose the little priest before the whole colony, but the coming of John Wesley had saved the situation. He had meant to have him tried and imprisoned for his relationship with Mrs. Welch, and had had him shadowed to that end, and believed he had all the evidence he required. He had found that Charles Wesley was in the habit of visiting that virago Welch and of sometimes staying until midnight. Oglethorpe believed that Charles was spreading rumors about his character in order to hide his own sin with this woman. So any man of the world might have reasoned, but there were yet some things that a man of the world could not see—things that passed for everyday conversation under Epworth roof—things of rules and saints and guidance. The soldier, uninitiated in Holy Club language, must have blinked to hear Charles Wesley's explanation. He was, he said, but following the advice of the saints in never conversing with a woman in the

face of the sun. It was not the woman's body with which the priest was concerned. The urgency until midnight was for her soul.

Oglethorpe had believed Charles Wesley to be a hypocrite of the worst type, but something, even before John's visit, had stayed his hand from condign punishment. Paradoxically, it was the soldier who had felt himself the champion of religion. He had determined that he would not expose Charles Wesley lest religion should be hurt in the colony through him. He knew what a score it would be for the scoffers, and what a tale it would have provided in ribald mirth for eighteenth-century playgoers. It was the kind of stuff over which the blades of fashion would have made very merry as was their custom. Oglethorpe was not going to let them have the chance, for, as he says: "I considered the effect it would have upon religion. That that should be wounded through your side I could not bear. Your history would be made a play or novel of." What a fate for the son of Susanna Wesley!

But there was something more that had stayed the hand of Oglethorpe when he would have crushed that son between its finger and thumb. A little old man in London had laughed so much at the soldier for taking his precious nephews to convert the Indians, by Holy Club methods, that he had ended by insulting Oglethorpe himself. It was the shade of Matthew Wesley that had saved his nephew Charles from prison and perhaps death in Georgia. This was the soldier's summing up: "Above all your uncle!

His triumph over you and religion turned the scale, and I verily believe God sent me that night to be insulted by him to save you."

There was something also in the very large-heartedness of this soldier that had saved the mischievous priest from destruction. It was his pitiable little white face and the prostration of fear in the once perky Charles Wesley. As Oglethorpe looked at him he mused on the mind of a man and the inscrutable chances of life. He knew what it was to expect death himself, and believed that then the far view of things was the only justice. On the night of his dangerous expedition to the Spaniards he had so debated with himself over that shrinking, white-faced priest: "This man must either be innocent or deeply penitent; whichever 'tis 'tis the same to me. I am going to cast myself on death and the mercy of God, and shall I refuse forgiveness to my fellow creature? No, I will not only forgive him, but so forgive him as I would God should forgive me." Surely such magnanimity from a man of the world was enough to stagger the mechanized piety of the Holy Club and the holy Wesleys.

XIV

DESPERATE REMEDIES

IF General Oglethorpe had forgiven Charles Wesley there was no reason why he should add mortification to his magnanimity by retaining the thorn in the flesh. He made up an excuse to save the priest's precious dignity, and promptly returned him to England. Before the soldier parted from his little tormenter he gave him one piece of sound advice. It had a sting in the tail, perhaps, for Oglethorpe had suffered much while Charles Wesley worked out his own salvation. This was his parting word to the High Church priest: "On many accounts I should recommend to you marriage rather than celibacy. You are of a social temper and would find in a married state the difficulties of working out your salvation exceedingly lessened and your helps as much increased." It was a soldier's remedy, and would later be recommended to Brother John also for a safe prescription for keeping him out of mischief. For all his trouble the storm which Charles Wesley had raised broke on his brother's head, and Oglethorpe found his help and advice once more needed to extricate this second Wesley from serious complications.

On one unlucky day John Wesley called upon Dr. Hawkins to collect a preparation of the bark for loss of voice. The nervous exaction of rescuing Charles

Wesley from the toils had taken its toll of his brother, but worse was yet in store. Mrs. Hawkins rose in her wrath against her one-time friend. She threatened him that day with a pistol and a pair of scissors, and made a fierce attempt to cut off his adorable curls. She towered above him and held the poor little priest down on her bed and tore his cassock with her teeth. The Holy Club was no match for that tempest of feminine jealousy and hatred. The neighbors and a sergeant who ran in to the rescue must have wondered to find Wesley in so compromising a situation, but they could do little to extricate him from that bed of fury. They held the woman's arms, with their grasped wealth of pistol and scissors, but even so she managed to meet her teeth in Wesley's arm. In fact, he was only saved by the finesse of Dr. Hawkins, who finally dashed in on a stricken field and whisked his wife off her feet with an admirable low tackle.

Oglethorpe again had to hear the whole story and summon all to his tent of justice and deal out a severe reprimand. How was he ever to establish England's Colony safely here on the quicksands of neurotic women and prying priests? The whole plan would be wrecked by these Wesleys and their incomprehensible mischief-making.

John Wesley himself was in danger of inheriting all the odium which had attached to his brother Charles in Georgia. He prayed that his eyes might be opened, but went on blindly none the less on his thorny path of soul saving. People began to hate

him and believe that he let out the secrets which he had gleaned from his High Church Confessional methods. One honest soul told him roundly that he had no right to pry into other people's business "in order to set them together by the ears." John Wesley was astonished. Was he not trying to save the people? What motive could he have but that? To which his candid friend replied: "A pure delight in doing mischief. I believe in the morning when you say your prayers you resolve against it, but by the time you have been abroad two hours all your resolutions are vanished and you can't be easy until you're at it again." It was a severe indictment of the methods of the Holy Club. The most rigorous observance of Prime, Matins, Lauds, Sext and Evensong seemed to accomplish nothing in a distracted world.

Now John Wesley had both charm and a doctor's mastery of a situation; he was also an indefatigable worker, and yet he was not succeeding at all. It was true that Brother Charles had fouled the running for him with these fearful saints of Frederica, but with all his desires to straighten out tangles he had himself failed most lamentably. The truth was that he had nothing really to offer to sinners in an earthly paradise. The Gospel tarried while John Wesley worked himself into a fever with rules and rites and confessions and sacraments. Brother Charles was prepared to despair of God rather than confess that he himself could be wrong, but John Wesley was miserable and did not dare to think that the "Christian Sacrifice" could have failed. He would go on baptizing babies

by triune immersion as though his life hung on it. He would go on dispensing the mysteries of God to his parishioners with an equally iron hand. Susanna's son never gave up anything easily. Now he had come to Georgia to save his own soul and incidentally the souls of the colonists, and saved they should all be even if he were to die in the attempt.

General Oglethorpe considered that John Wesley with all his whimsies driven from his brain might be more useful to him in life than in death. His plan was a simple one and consisted in throwing a beautiful young girl right at Wesley's head. She was the niece of Causton, the magistrate at Savannah, and was living with her uncle and aunt. The plan was simple, as became a soldier, but Oglethorpe and Miss Sophy's relatives believed it to be fool-proof. The only thing they had not taken into account was the training of Susanna Wesley. Far across the seas from Epworth's apron-strings the controls still held good. Miss Sophy Hopkey would make John Wesley suffer and teach him much, but she would find it very difficult to marry him. Susanna had seen to that with her talk of fire and burning brands, and her warnings against the Delilahs of life. But her initiation into a hell of suffering was also to fall into its place in the plan of salvation.

Of all the strange servants of God and the instruments of the revival of His worship, surely none was ever more strange than Miss Sophy Hopkey of Georgia. She was a different proposition from any that had posed John Wesley before. He had loved

the vital Sally Kirkham, with her quick wit and her mature advice, and he still sat at her feet in a staid friendship. He had lost his heart to Aspasia, that experienced widow, but here was virginal beauty all ready for the asking. That he was impressed with her almost at their first meeting is evident. The Sunday when he gave her the Holy Communion is marked in the diary with a pensive "which of them shall endure to the end?" and a world of sad memories. He wrote to both Varanese and Aspasia on that very day. There was a flying to à Kempis again and a sojourn in his garden in pensive thought. Miss Sophy was only eighteen years old. She might be suspected of not having great intelligence, but she had other graces to commend her to John Wesley. She seems to have spent much of her time in just looking at him. She was very quiet and very obedient and she had a soft yieldingness which was quite devastating. She was a good pupil, or rather a good listener, for there remain no examination results to show how much Miss Sophy really absorbed of all that Wesley taught her. She had a happy knack of being interested in all that he was interested in, be it singing or gardens or the French language. He could superimpose upon her the atmosphere of the Cotswold Hills in his little bungalow in Savannah and find his empty heart beating again to the old well-known throb of friendship.

So far from any obstacle being thrown in his way, he was to receive all the help, and more, that he needed from the Causton relatives. No designing

Mamma of Jane Austen's circle could have done more, and yet, time after time, a strange inhibition seemed to descend upon Wesley when just on the point of declaring his love. The plotters arranged the maximum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity, and yet Susanna's training held fast. He was gloriously dense when Causton actually threw Miss Sophy at his very feet with his explosive: "The girl will never be easy till she is married. I give her up to you. Do what you will with her. Take her into your own hands. Promise her what you will. I will make it good." All John Wesley did was to take her into his school, which he ran strictly on his mother's lines, and after four months of daily converse he once touched her hand.

General Oglethorpe fared no better with his impersonation of Providence and the designing parent. He commanded Wesley to take Miss Sophy in his own boat all the way from Frederica to Savannah, and must have congratulated himself upon his worldly wisdom. It would be one glorious hike by sea and island streams in an earthly paradise of indescribable beauty. Who was proof against such blandishments? John Wesley did feel then that he stood in jeopardy, but he hoped that his desire to live single might be a sufficient protection. But for all that he found himself saying things that he would not have done if he had not been so carried away with the beauty of it all. The boats went lazily forward or tied up to fascinating little islands. The company walked and bathed and camped out by day and night.

SON TO SUSANNA

One lovely day John Wesley talked of holiness with Miss Sophy by a little stream of clear water in a grove of overarching trees. One never-to-be-forgotten night they lay awake by their camp fire and talked of life. The flames danced and their eyes met across the blaze as they lay under their scout tent in a privacy of surrounding darkness. It was on that night that words sprang to Wesley's lips unrehearsed by reason. They were words which later demanded prayers every hour to reduce the possibility of such a thing happening again, for he notes in his diary that he now began to be very much afraid of this woman. That beautiful voice which was presently to woo souls from the prisonhouse must have sounded strangely compelling that night by the camp fire, for the words in the darkness were these: "Miss Sophy, I should think myself happy if I was to spend my life with you." Was this then to be the end of Susanna Wesley's travail? Was this to be the destiny of the Brand plucked from the burning? To live all his strenuous, serious, palpitating life by the side of this chit of a child in the backwoods of America? The girl burst into tears and Wesley felt his way to safer ground, to end this unpremeditated declaration, innocuously enough, in a Psalm.

Perhaps, after all, it was the very camp fire that saved Wesley that night. Before his eyes were spluttering logs. Leaping flames were being tossed into the night by burning brands. Like Isaac, it had been Miss Sophy herself who had helped him to collect the wood for her own sacrifice. Something arrested the

young man, and it is true to say that when Wesley thought over this very incident long afterwards, the words which sprang instinctively to his mind were those of the Brand plucked from the burning. For all Miss Sophy's cool self-possession and quiet, meek demeanor, she made Wesley think of fire and caused him a devastating fear round his heart. That sliding into a Psalm, too, was altogether typical of his mother and her methods of defense. So had she gloried in them. So had she taught these very songs to her little scholars in Epworth nursery. So had the persecuted Puritans sung them amid the flames. There was nothing better calculated to pluck Wesley to safety than that mingling in song of the woman's voice with his own manly tones. He reached out a hand to mother and sisters in the darkness and the danger was fled away.

General Oglethorpe knew what he was about when he so tempted John Wesley. A home was particularly dear to the little man, and there was nothing better calculated to collapse the Holy Club than matrimony. Wesley knew himself that the two were incompatible, and so was never tired of declaring his design "to live single." He had come to America to save his soul, and who was Miss Sophy to wreck such an undertaking? But it had been a very near thing that night and he was really frightened. It was the world of the eighteenth century and the world of primeval beauty in Georgia, but Susanna Wesley had once reigned on the mud-flats of Axholme and her spirit walked abroad that night for her son's protec-

tion. General Oglethorpe, for all his dashing manhood and his training in the arts of eighteenth-century intrigue, was no match for that much-tried woman. He had been completely outmaneuvered and his desperate remedy for Susanna's son had failed. He was to find that hundreds of miles of estranging sea were impotent to quench the roaring flames of Epworth Rectory when ingeniously fanned by the hands of Susanna Wesley.

XV

A BUNGALOW IN ARCADY

IT was Mrs. Samuel Wesley who was the presiding genius of that strange school which John Wesley organized for young Delamotte and Miss Sophy at Savannah. With a woman's tenacity to save old home things Wesley found infinite pleasure in rolling up Epworth, Oxford and Stanton in England and unrolling them in his American shack. He made a garden and drove in stakes for a neat fence. He cleaned his house out and made it a home. He arranged his books and played on the flute. With his two pupils he found the joy of children of his own to be instructed in all Susanna's ways, with the added elegance of Aspasia's French and the à Kempis pattern of dear Varanese. There followed the happiest days that Wesley was to know in Georgia. Delamotte gave him a lad's hero-worship and Miss Sophy came to breakfast. All day she stayed with him, and Wesley would see her home in the sweet evening light and return to Delamotte confident of another blissful day tomorrow. When Wesley was ill Miss Sophy nursed him so tenderly that it gave a lovely home feeling to his Arcadian bungalow. She was so neat, and he loved neat women. There had been no frills at Epworth, with its plain living and high thinking, and even Aspasia, for all her ramping flowers, had

SON TO SUSANNA

been very neat. So much of what had been best in England might perchance be found again in America with this girl of eighteen summers and her rapt attention for her strangest of schoolmasters.

In Susanna Wesley's school at Epworth they had all loved to sing Psalms each day before the real struggle began with their lessons. Now Wesley followed his mother's example and added on the hymns of Dr. Watts and the new Moravian songs to the collection. A fascinating plan took shape of making his own hymnbook. He chose some of the old home ones which he could remember and added one of his father's to adjust the balance. It was the one that Susanna remembered when the old man died, with its inner meaning of the secret that had made them one:

“Behold the Saviour of mankind
Nailed to the shameful tree!
How vast the love that Him inclined
To bleed and die for thee!”

Wesley translated the German hymns and beat them into verses and tried them out first on Miss Sophy. The diary is full of her and of singing. The days were bright with more than Cotswold sunshine, and the nights beautiful with the moon which had once brought Aspasia to his mind in a College Quad. The garden was his own, and he had à Kempis in his pocket, but at Wesley's side now sat a beautiful girl singing to him songs of melting love. Surely this

was the strangest way of all to take to bring about a revival of religion, and yet it was to prove most gloriously in the plan.

The Moravian hymns were a revelation. Through the words of their Divine passion throbs a very human heart. The worshiper no longer falls prostrate before Jehovah with clouds and lightning round about Him, but he touches tenderly the wounds of Jesus. The Moravian came to religion by way of his heart. He fell in love with Christ, and ever after, like the true lover, walked on air. Nothing more of the sorrow of this world could touch him, for he had passed through the veil of flesh and was safe in the very heart of his Lord. The blood of Jesus drowned all fear:

“With faith I plunge me in this sea,
 Here is my hope, my joy, my rest;
 Hither, when hell assails, I flee,
 I look into my Saviour’s breast:
 Away, sad doubt and anxious fear!
 Mercy is all that’s written there.”

Here was all the protection and the love which John Wesley could ask. It was a perfect escape from all entanglements, and it had the added advantage of quenching the old flames of that Dissenter’s Hell to which his mother had introduced him at so tender an age. Moreover, the hymns were so human. They spoke fearlessly of hearts, breasts, faces and arms of love. It was daring imagery to give to the Godhead,

but Wesley knew just what it meant. He was accustomed to watch the faces of his friends. He knew when Miss Sophy had a headache because the sparkling eye was dulled, and well he knew what the hymn meant which bade him read the signs of anger or mercy in the face of God himself. He had never dared to look God in the face before for all his vaunted reason. He believed in the head-in-the-sand method there and in a very good insurance policy in his good deeds. He never passed an hour without God, but it was a great relief to combine the emotions which Miss Sophy aroused with the ones which God should evoke. It set Wesley eagerly translating those strange hymns, and the singing of them took the place of much of the ejaculatory prayer. This was something like a religion at last. It could be sung in gardens that reminded him of Stanton and in school hours that reminded him of home. Wesley could now halloo God's name to the reverberate hills when his heart was full of that old teasing emotion which had once destroyed his peace of mind. He could get these dangerous women into proper perspective if he might sublimate them into the love of God. He had never before known such an experience. He sang now everywhere he went. He introduced hymns into his stiff little services, and sang them in the houses and by the sickbeds of his parishioners. He sang them as he walked and before he dressed in his correct Church of England cassock. House, garden and forest echoed with these wistful German songs which spoke so strangely of the love

of God. The Moravians could be little better than heretics, and as for Watts he was the Arch-Dissenter, but it looked as though they were having their own way with the son of the Rector of Epworth.

There could have been no revival of religion without just that quality of love which John Wesley found and appropriated in the forests of Georgia. Years afterwards England and America would still be struggling with his secret. Continents would still be discussing the morality of such hymns in the outcrop of revivalist meetings and the lilt and compulsion of Sankey's harmonium. But the secret was John Wesley's first, and perhaps Miss Sophy must bear her share of responsibility. It was that susceptible heart of his that was always betraying him, but he would soon brace himself against it and fall back into the perfect model of Orthodoxy. The word "Resolution" would soon stand in his diary side by side with the word "German." Soon he would see more in those hymns than at first appeared, and would find that they also deplored the loving of God with but half the heart. Soon Wesley would be singing pensively "Strange flames far from my heart remove," and he discovered a singular attachment for one of these hymns which mourned an earthly thralldom:

"My soul before Thee prostrate lies,
To Thee, her source, my spirit flies.
My wants I mourn, my chains I see:
O let Thy presence set me free!"

But there was a going in the treetops and among the shriveled leaves of old memories in Wesley's heart. It must have dawned upon him that things had come to a pretty pass when he broke his Friday fast because Miss Sophy had offered him a cup of coffee. Young Delamotte also put in a word of warning. The lad was consumed with jealousy, and wept to think of his own fate should Wesley actually marry the woman. At present the wretch did go home at night, but she came back so early in the morning that Delamotte groaned under her leechlike presence. He, scarcely ever now had his beloved John Wesley all to himself, and he declared, not without sadness, that his chief was "losing ground." It was an amusing representation of the eternal triangle, but the actors were very serious about it all. Indeed the worst nearly happened one day when Wesley all but proposed to the girl amid this lovely hymn singing. It was only a sudden thought which "had not the consent of my mind," and he was really rather grateful for the girl's answer, which landed him once more on firm ground. He had read old Puritan literature to her and put her through her paces in his hymn-book, and after such bewilderment she very rightly said "she thought it was best for clergymen not to be encumbered with worldly cares." But Wesley knew that the ground of the Holy Club had tottered beneath him and that he had had "a very narrow escape." He turned to Delamotte for advice, who followed up his advantage with much sound wisdom against the match. But Wesley was not satisfied.

He turned to the Germans and was quite startled with their full-blooded and bracing counsel. They really could not see what all the fuss was about. Why, if the man wanted to marry, let him have the girl. This tentative distress and endless discussion was not the way of their robust wooings. But they had not been rescued from fire and been taught how strait was the gate by a mother who had wrestled long with matrimony. Deeply wretched and greatly in love, the only way open to John Wesley seemed now the way of flight.

The city of refuge was named Irene, but it was four miles away from Miss Sophy, so had its points for all its feminine appellation. Before his departure he sat down to write some sort of explanation of his conduct. It was after dinner on Sunday that the priest took up his pen for one of his well-known letters, and there, as he wondered how to word the tumult of his heart, the fire motif came rushing up from the depth. That was it exactly, and so he could write it down thus: "I find, Miss Sophy, I can't take fire into my bosom and not be burnt. I am therefore retiring for a while to desire the direction of God. Join with me, my friend, in fervent prayer that He would show me what is best to be done."

At Irene John Wesley firmly meant to find out what was best to be done. He made a desperate effort to cast fire from his bosom by his old method of self-examination and prayer. It had helped him through the loss of Varanese and Aspasia, but now it

broke down under the strain. He discovered that God had not even half his attention, for "my heart was with Miss Sophy all the time." He flew at the trees and blazed a trail through the forest in a desperate effort to drive the minx away by sweating toil, but round and round her person his mind would turn and twist in a terrible obsession. Half ashamed, he crept back to Savannah, but yet he would not give up the fight altogether and pay her a visit, although he felt he must die could he not see her passing by, for "I longed to see her were it but for a moment." There at Savannah by the sad sea waves Wesley paced up and down stabbed through and through by the strong pain of desire. And yet fear held him, and he obeyed the summons to get into a boat and return to Irene, although he confessed it was for him as the sentence of death. But at Irene he managed to stay until his reasonable and legitimate round of duties hailed him back to Savannah.

This time the strain had been terrible, and it had told on him as in the far-off Stanton days. He was ill with his old complaint and a pitiable collapse of nerve. Again he had resolved to renounce the world. He shrank back from reality and could not bear to envisage "the complicated temptations of a married state," and yet his heart and his flesh cried out against him. Sunday and Church always seemed to make his way so difficult with these dangerous women, for now Sunday was upon him and the Lord would send Miss Sophy to worship whether Wesley's knees knocked together or no. It only remained to bring

out the old armor of self-preservation and to keep praying hard before the service and holding on to à Kempis for dear life. Delamotte looked on and wondered. How heartily he must have detested Miss Sophy then, but, with fine self-effacement, he took her place at the hymn singing with his master and, in more practical fashion, sent for the doctor after dinner.

XVI

MISS SOPHY COMES TO BREAKFAST

JOHN WESLEY had spent two hours of his precious time on Saturday "mending the way." Was he repairing the road to his bungalow for the feet of that lass with the delicate air? On Monday she surely would come along it with that crumpled note about fire in her keeping, and as surely she must walk straight in and take possession of his heart. But would she? Wesley was in strange agitation as she came, in the sweet morning air, up the path to his bungalow. He got through breakfast with strong doses of the old Puritan Owen, and then he knew his hour had come. Would she step into the garden with him for a moment? And Sophy stepped. She was expecting nothing less than an offer of marriage after that letter of fire in the priest's bosom and reports of his Sunday agitation and the arrival of his doctor. She could not have been prepared for the unexpected burrow down which her quarry bolted. The man was obviously pierced with Cupid's arrow, but here in the garden she was to watch his desperate struggle to wrench it from its target. It was surely the strangest wooing, for the words she heard were these: "I am resolved, Miss Sophy, if I marry at all, not to do it till I have been among the Indians."

Were the two of them made of flesh and blood at

all she must have wondered that morning in the garden. Was that the way he had begun his proposal to Sally Kirkham with the seven long years well in the forefront of his approaches? Wesley's wooings are models of delayed action. He could never be any match for the Jack Chapons of life who are ready to marry the girl on the instant. It was terribly disappointing, for well Sophy knew that it was Oglethorpe's belief that Wesley never meant to go among the Indians at all. Also it was St. Valentine's Day, but that seemed to be a feast not named in the Calendar of the Saints of the Holy Club. The girl laid hold of the first weapon to her hand and in a wholly commendable fit of vexation replied that she would never come to breakfast with him again. To Wesley this was a blow. The words draw themselves out in his diary like the slow droppings from a wound: "She would breakfast with me no more." He had enjoyed those breakfast times so much with the young girl and with Delamotte complete as gooseberry. Wesley had become lyrical over them. It was so glorious to arise in the morning singing hymns to God and know that Miss Sophy would soon come to breakfast. There was one hymn of which he was especially fond which declared that while he had breath he would praise his Maker. It always seemed somehow connected with his clothes as he tumbled out of bed in those joyous mornings, for at the very end of his life, when, in the stupor of death he tried to rise and dress, he found that old hymn again still wrapped up in his clothes.

There was worse to follow for the stricken lover, for Miss Sophy's pride was hurt. She told him: "I don't think it signifies for me to learn French any longer and people wonder what I can do so long at your house." She must always have found that Aspasia way a little steep for the reward of Wesley as a husband at the end of it. Also the girl had suffered much under Haliburton's Life and frequent and strong doses of Thomas à Kempis. There was a certain relief in the less strenuous life at her Aunt Causton's house and a sense of holiday. After all, there were other suitors, and much more reasonable ones, too, than this incomprehensible John Wesley. But he would miss her terribly. The machinery of the Holy Club was sadly out of gear, but Wesley substituted the later ritual of hymn singing and tried to hold his ground as in old days. The diary reads: "Sung, prayed, sung, prayed, sung." His mind was back at Stanton with Varanese, and the cry for help reappears in his diary as in the days when he must bring his heart to heel in contemplation of her loss. He seems to have had this old friendship always at the back of his mind and to have believed that he would be able to keep Miss Sophy's friendship in the same way as Varanese had been good to him. It is probable that the letter to a mythical Mrs. Chapman which was written at this time of turmoil in Georgia was really sent to Mrs. Chapon, for he burst out in it: "True friendship is doubtless stronger than death, else yours could never have subsisted still in spite of all opposition, and even after a thousand miles are

interposed between us." This letter reveals the old teasing arguments of reason and heart, and shows his usual desperate effort to conform his will as to the pleasures of life to the will of God. But he has taken a softer mold since the days when Varanese knew him at Stanton, for in this letter he speaks of the Love of God in a different way. He has been singing the Moravian hymns, and he has sung them by the side of Miss Sophy. He is even prepared, will she but speak to him again, to say that religion need not be such a stiff, austere thing as his older friends supposed that he considered it. In this famous letter Wesley was approaching dangerous ground, for the safeguards in the Varanese friendship were weakening with the nearness of Miss Sophy. The face of religion itself was changing, which was a danger in itself. Now Wesley was attributing feminine adjectives to what had once been all rock and iron: "I am convinced that true religion has nothing sour, austere, unsociable, unfriendly in it, but on the contrary implies the most winning sweetness, the most amiable softness and gentleness." Varanese must have wondered, for the friends of lunatic Morgan would never have so described the Oxford religion of John Wesley. But she could not know that almost at the same time as he wrote to her he was saying of Miss Sophy: "Calling at Mrs. Causton's she was there alone. This was indeed an hour of trial. Her words, her eyes, her air, her every motion and gesture, were full of such a softness and sweetness! I know not what might have been the consequence had I then but

touched her hand. And how I avoided it I know not. Surely God is over all!"

Young Delamotte might well tremble for his hero, and all the more when Miss Sophy herself somewhat relented and revisited the bungalow. She would keep looking at Wesley with the quick blushes rising to her cheeks and she appeared very dangerous in her pleading yet speechless femininity. Delamotte knew she must thus prove irresistible, for the relief to have her there again, confessing her friendship, carried John Wesley off his feet. He compelled Delamotte to leave them alone and then so shyly stretched out his hand and took her own, and was amazed when she did not withdraw it. Fear prompted him at once to remark that he thought of going to England, but when she wept to hear the news he was almost undone. The barrage of all the Indians and a voyage to England was perilously thinning, and he would soon have to face up to reality if things continued to move at such a pace in his arcadian bungalow. But after the bliss of that interview he had to face the tears of Delamotte, and his own reason told him plainly that he had done a foolish thing. It must have been almost impossible for Cupid to deal with John Wesley at all, so clogged was he with exquisite reasons. The scene which was presently to be enacted between Delamotte and his hero seemed a case of reason triumphant, or was it the apex of unreason? The two conspirators "tossed up" in great solemnity to find out what the Lord would have them do with this troublesome woman. It reads like the children's rhyme of "This

year, next year, sometime, never," but the conspirators had only arrived at their decision after a day's fasting and prayer. John Wesley, then, in the presence of God, wrote down the awful words on different slips of paper: "Marry"; "Think not of it this year"; and "Think of it no more." With great good sense young Delamotte drew the last one, and Wesley himself felt a sense of escape as he looked over his shoulder to see the result of this extraordinary sweep.

Did Delamotte play fair or did he call it guidance and take courage? In any case he pressed his advantage home. He knew his hero, and would fain know whether Wesley should converse with the charmer at all. The lad got the perfect lot again. It reads in a whimsical way and is so entirely proper, for the Lord said: "Only in the presence of Mr. Delamotte."

From the point of view of Miss Sophy the Guidance had failed singularly, but she had recourse to the more substantial help of her uncle and aunt. Delamotte must have faltered where he firmly trod when he discovered the temptations to which his hero must further be subjected, for Mr. Causton took Wesley along the line of least resistance. He tempted him with a garden. He did more, for he showed him the goodness of the land, with its streams and its woods, and sent a strangely sweet, softening influence round Wesley's heart even as he gazed "on the brow of a hill." This time poverty was not to stand in his way. The Caustons would make all necessary provision and they were people of wealth. There was a pleasant house, a delightful garden at a small

distance from the town, another house and garden in town, and a third a few miles off with a large tract of fruitful land adjoining it. All this should be Wesley's along with the hand of Miss Sophy. What would he not have given to have been able to lay all that at the feet of Varanese on that day of the first cuckoo's song in that old April of the Cotswold Hill? But now the little man seemed to enjoy the luxury of giving it all up with a too lengthy prayer to be quite heartbroken: "O Lord God, thou God of my fathers, plenteous in mercy and truth, behold I give Thee not thousands of rams or ten thousands of rivers of oil but the desire of my eyes, the joy of my heart, the one thing upon earth that I longed for."

Mrs. Causton felt it was time for her to turn her feminine mind to this problem of John Wesley's heart after her husband had failed with his robust masculine bribe of the kingdoms of this earth and the glory of them. It was a better plan to quicken lagging feet, but it was a cruel trap to set for the son of Susanna Wesley. From the temptation of the hilltop John Wesley returned to drink a dish of tea with the ladies at Mrs. Causton's house. He confesses that that pleasant prospect of smiling country had "shot a softness into my soul" which had not left him ere he was again face to face with Miss Sophy. The minx herself was on top of her form, for she kept walking about in the garden outside the room where the tea party was in progress. Delamotte was safely away in his lonely bungalow, but Wesley remembered the Lord's words, "Only in the presence of Mr.

Delamotte," and tried to keep his end up inside the house as best he could. But after a short struggle he was bowled completely over and stepped lightly out to the fair enchantress. In a moment she had seized both his hands and smiled in his face in a rapturous way. Wesley gave himself up for lost, but the old fire motif and Mr. Causton's masculine blunder saved him in the nick of time, for "I looked upon her and should have said too much had we had a moment longer. But in the instant Mr. Causton called us in. So I was once more 'snatched as a brand out of the fire.' "

Mrs. Causton must have given her spouse a piece of her mind that night for his clumsiness, for she fairly lost her temper with Wesley next day and snapped out: "Mr. Wesley, I wish you would take her; take her away with ye." But the hour was flown and so far he had saved his immaculate little person from assault, so that he replied very politely that Miss Sophy was welcome to his house and to all he had there in the matter of books and raisins, but he managed to get back to Delamotte quite alone even after that outburst. It is true that he went away with a heavy heart, for Mrs. Causton had played her trump card late that evening and had produced the dreaded rival for Sophy's hand. He learned that night that Sophy was engaged to Mr. Williamson. The girl herself had answered only with tears and Wesley could not tear himself away until ten o'clock, when he walked in heaviness home. There in his deserted bungalow he sat down and

wrote up his diary, concluding the day with the eloquent restraint of the sad line: "11. Miss Sophy engaged. Alas!"

The news of the next morning was calculated to strike John Wesley to the ground. Like anyone enchanted he had not been able to keep away from the Caustons' house, and by ten o'clock was there again only to hear that Miss Sophy and her new lover had settled everything the night before and were to be married at once. Wesley believed that he must be dreaming. He can never have heard of such indecent haste, and yet Mrs. Causton was speaking quite calmly and saying just that: "Sir, Mr. Causton and I are exceedingly obliged to you for all the pains you have taken about Sophy. And so is Sophy too; and she desires you would publish the banns of marriage between her and Mr. Williamson on Sunday." All the time the woman was watching his face—a very beautiful face, luminous with fasting and grief. She spared him nothing with her "Why are you uneasy?" Why indeed? Then cruelest blow of all—he might seek his explanation from Miss Sophy herself who awaited him in that delectable land of promise of the garden and the stream. She was actually then looking round the estate with her new lover to see all the possibilities for Adam and Eve in a new earthly paradise.

Wesley's reasoning powers came in like a flood. His mother had taught him to live by his wits, and she must have commended his passivity could she have seen him then. He stood stock still while his

mind got to work on the problem. He was sensing the way of advance and the way of escape in these wise words: "I was uneasy at the very thought of her marrying one whom I believed would make her very unhappy, yet I could not resolve to save her from him by marrying her myself. Besides, I reasoned thus: Either she is engaged or not; if she is, I would not have her if I might; if not, there is nothing in this show which ought to alter my previous resolution."

So reasoning he returned to Delamotte, but he found it impossible to be reasonable any longer there in that bungalow where she had sat so close beside him that sometimes he was in a holy panic lest he should touch but the hem of her garment and be altogether undone. Now the long-suffering Delamotte was pressed into service again. He must go to the Garden of Eden and ask if his master's presence would be welcome to Miss Sophy. What thoughts must have revolved in the young man's head as he carried that message and as he saw his hero depart with that drawn face of his and his nervous diffidence! Wesley found Miss Sophy and Williamson together, and was disarmed from the first by her sweetness of address and her friendliness as she said: "Why would you put yourself to the trouble of sending? What need of that ceremony between us? You know your company is always welcome to me." Wesley could not answer. For once the ready words died on his lips, but Williamson broke through his stricken silence with a brief and manly: "I suppose, sir, you know

what was agreed on last night between Miss Sophy and me?" And Wesley answered with tragic mien: "I have heard something, but I could not believe it unless I should hear it from Miss Sophy herself."

There must have been a going in the treetops, for Williamson left them alone together for a full hour after that, and John Wesley mingled his tears with the tears of Miss Sophy. It was Wesley's dark hour, and it was beyond words to describe when later he tried to sum it up in cold black and white: "'Tis hard to describe the complication of passions and tumult of thought which I then felt—love shooting through all the recesses of my soul and sharpening every thought and passion. Underneath there was a faint desire to do and suffer the will of God, which, joined to a doubt whether that proposal would be accepted, was just strong enough to prevent my saying plainly what I wonder to this hour I did not say: 'Miss Sophy, will you marry me?'"

As Williamson sauntered back to them the lady sweetly concluded that burning interview with: "I hope I shall always have your friendship." Any man should know that so well-worn a phrase in that connection is quite hopeless. It must have then happened all over again as it did in golden Stanton long ago on an April morning—"I hope I shall always have your friendship." Again it had come to that! And so John Wesley returned alone to Delamotte and the pains of hell got hold upon him. In spite of his pride and his fear, and in spite of iron repression, love would keep breaking through.

XVII

MISS SOPHY RUNS AWAY

GLIBLY had Mrs. Causton mentioned banns of matrimony. It appeared to have been too glibly. To John Wesley it could not be just as simple as that, for he had doubts of the spiritual attainments of Mr. Williamson and did not believe that Miss Sophy was now any better than she should be. He made various visits to the lovers and to Mr. Causton and talked of banns and crosses and contrite spirits, but he showed no signs at all of getting forward with the business in hand. Marriage was a difficult thing to compass in Savannah when John Wesley was the priest in charge. He had a way of making things difficult for the ordinary mortal. No Dissenter dare so much as approach his Eucharistic Feast, although the authorities had hoped cheerfully that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper might be made to embrace them all. No baby dare show its face for baptism unless prepared to endure trine immersion and to produce irreproachable godparents in right quantities and right qualities. Certainly no person could dream of marriage unless he could produce the certificate of a plaster saint.

Miss Bovey, who was Miss Sophy's friend, had proved already how difficult it was, because for some reason John Wesley objected to her wished-for union

with Mr. Burnside. With her experience known and conned it was not likely that Mr. Williamson and Miss Sophy would fare much better. To love's young dream the priestly admonitions must have proved most irksome, and it was certain that the breaking-point could not be far off. Williamson had already lost his temper and told Wesley to his face: "Sir, you shall speak to her no more till we are married. You can persuade her to anything. After you went from the lot yesterday she would neither eat nor drink for two hours, but was crying continually and in such an agony she was fit for nothing."

But love has a way of laughing at locksmiths even when clad in cassock and bands. The four young people planned to outwit John Wesley altogether and save both themselves and him a lot of argument. But four short days after Miss Sophy's engagement had been announced to Wesley the two bridal couples of the Williamsons and the Burnside's traveled over the border into Carolina and there were married by a priest, innocent alike of High Church doctrine and a proper reverence for the legality of banns. As North Carolina possessed but one traveling missionary, it was not likely that he would let such a thing as banns or license stand in his way when his scattered flock must be married when he came their way or else continue to live in sin. His appearance at Purrysburg just over the border from Georgia was the signal of salvation for those who groaned under Wesley's laws and formalities. So was Miss Sophy married in a kind of Gretna Green adventure in spite

of the fact that she had been Wesley's star pupil and the female neophyte of his Holy Club. That fellow in Carolina could be little better than a Dissenter to do so barbarous a thing!

It is significant that just now Wesley took to reading *Job* and to talking and acting like that old Hammer of the Dissenters in Epworth Parish. The news of that runaway match was a knock-down blow for the son of old Sam Wesley. It brought on his old Stanton trouble, and now all the diary is strewn with agony. There the stark words stand sentinel. "Pain," "Much more pain," "Much pain," and in place of dinner that old antidote à Kempis appears.

Wesley considered that wedding day of March 12, 1737, as another of his darkest days in a sad life of defeat. He had feared for his pride should he make a direct proposal, and now he had lost all. He feared lest he should suffer as Varanese had made him suffer in her refusal, but now that Miss Sophy was lost altogether he still beat about in his mind wondering how he could still keep her friendship. Varanese had been kind, why not Miss Sophy? True, she had no convenient nickname, but it is significant that he calls her Miss Sophy all the time in his diary when he should have mentioned her only as Mrs. Williamson. But it was one thing to have Sally Kirkham married and to retain her friendship as Varanese and quite another thing to keep on thinking of Miss Sophy and to ignore Mrs. Williamson altogether. There was all the difference in the world between Sally and Sophy. Sally's mind was still John Wes-

ley's, for he possessed her still in her letters and his own communings with her, but Sophy had never had a mind. The danger lurked there, for she was all woman. She did not care for the things of the mind, but only for the things of the body. There was no rapier cut and thrust of wit in her garden conversations. She spent her time reading the faces of John Wesley or of Williamson with a mental inventory of eyes, lips, teeth and hair. She marked the contrast of color and movement in a strange comparison of the flesh as though she were drawing a picture. So was she helped through those terrible doses of Jones and Haliburton, so was she saved from the extinction of boredom in the priest's holy endeavors for her soul. Now for the first time with her loss John Wesley had to withstand an assault of the flesh and the devil. In Stanton it had been sublimated in intellect and religion and at first with Miss Sophy in the hymn-singing, but now the whole force of his "inordinate affection" burst upon him. In horror he tried to restart all the machinery of the Holy Club, but it creaked badly and refused to go.

His diary is eloquent of trembling desire and fierce pain, and the exclamations are no longer ejaculatory prayer but the agitated "Could not pray," and an hour afterwards "Tried to pray, lost, sunk." And then the cry of a broken heart, "No such day since I first saw the sun! O deal tenderly with thy servant!" His mind seemed drugged with desire, and his whole being ached for someone to deal tenderly with him: "I was as stupid as if half awake and yet in the

sharpest pain I ever felt. To see her no more, that thought was as the piercing of a sword, it was not to be borne nor shaken off. I was weary of the world, of light, of life—I could not pray. Then indeed the snares of death were about me; the pains of hell overtook me.” God had left him alone with his sin.

The strain became at last unbearable. Wesley’s mind was revolving and revolving round one thought which in time was to become a dangerous obsession. That marriage of Miss Sophy’s seemed to crucify his mind, and he came to be able to concentrate on little else. It had been so shamefully irregular from his point of view, and so at the back of his mind he was always brooding on one thought. The fall of Miss Sophy from grace obsessed the priest of her soul. How could she treat the Church’s Sacraments like that when he had spent hours teaching her all the high church doctrines of the Holy Club. With head well in the sand he was convinced that such a marriage amounted to no marriage at all. And yet well he knew that it was abundantly real, for he had chidden her so harshly in the guise of aggrieved priest that gossiping tongues said he had made her miscarry her first child. He was horribly lonely, but he would make the most of all that remained to him—his own lean marriage with the Church. He must fix attention on himself, for pulsating, rapturous life had escaped him and he was left with only Delamotte and an empty bungalow. Wesley pursued Mrs. Williamson with his ghostly counsel until her husband could

stand it no longer and forbade his wife to have any dealings with the priest of her soul.

John Wesley's heart was empty. It was craving for something young, and the sight of the newly-weds and the gossip of their expectations was enough to drive him mad. He read à Kempis, he cut down trees, he made a journey to the scene of the fatal marriage in North Carolina and he began to substitute Watts for the German love lyrics. He was craving for something young in his arid life and wrote at length to Aspasia's little sister, Anne Granville, who had been fond of him in those far-off Stanton days. He thought lovingly of his own little sister, who was dear to him as the youngest of the family, and he wrote to her to come out to him to light up his lonely parsonage. He admitted some very naughty small boys to Holy Communion and on that Sunday read *The Song of the Three Children*, which they had read at Stanton when the world was young. He wrote to his mother suggesting a general emigration of the people of Wroote and Epworth to his hospitality in a vain hope of peopling his world with some who might appreciate him. The poison of his very self was eating the goodness of his heart and he was sure to go very wrong when he began writing like Brother Charles in his journal and thinking like his father of those pestilential Dissenters. He was astoundingly rude to the Moravian Bishop, whom he would not admit to Holy Communion, and he took all the texts of Scripture to himself as illustrative of God's approbation of his excellence. He determined

on an inhuman discharge of his parochial duties, and if his parishioners did not keep the letter of the law then woe betide them.

The love-starved, lonely man was surely working up to one grand climax of self-assertion. He had discharged some of his spleen against those soul-destroying hymns of the Moravians by repudiating their Bishop, and now at last he meant to wipe off his other load of resentment in as spectacular a way. It was on Sunday, the 7th of August, 1737, that the sinners of Savannah presented themselves at the Christian Sacrifice. "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins and are in love and charity with your neighbors and intend to lead a new life following the commandments of God—draw near with faith and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort." So said the priest, complete in all the panoply of Holy Church. So said John Wesley, but he really did not mean what he said. Sophy was kneeling at his feet to take the tokens of Christ's Passion from his lenient hand and he bent down and whispered something in her ear. He had meant to do it so that none in the church could hear, and he prided himself on his sagacity and felt he was behaving with all the mildness of which he was master. But he was too blind with self-love to see that he was wounding her as publicly as though he had shouted upon the house-tops that whispered message: "I can't administer the Holy Communion to you before I have spoken with you." For once in his life he cared nothing for the pain he inflicted, for round his empty heart he

wrapped the words of the Epistle for the day and took all their meaning to himself: "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it." That the temptation of that blushing young woman had been real was proved by this violent way he chose to strike out against it. She had denied him the wine of life and he would refuse her Living Bread. That was all the love and mystery he was master of, for he was shut out from the warmth of man's earthly mating, and so most surely the sinner should suffer under the only mastery of which he was capable. He longed to have her at his feet and burned to humiliate her still more in his arrogant letter which was to follow his refusal, with his dream of another scene of priestly triumph next Lord's Day. He wrote surely, with a sense of satisfaction: "If you offer yourself at the Lord's Table on Sunday I will advertise you as I have done more than once wherein you have done wrong. And when you have openly declared yourself to have truly repented I will administer to you the mysteries of God." In the diary the horrid deed is duly recorded in laconic fashion: "Eucharist, Miss Sophy repelled." So let all thine enemies perish, and so let evening shadows bring John Wesley to the end of a perfect day.

Monday morning is a notoriously difficult one for the clergy, but that of August 8, 1737, must have seemed black indeed to John Wesley. It was incredible that the son of Susanna Wesley should have lived

to see the day when he could read such words as these: "To all constables, tithing-men and others whom it may concern: you and each of you are hereby required to take the body of John Wesley, Clerk, and bring him before one of the bailiffs of the said town to answer the complaint of William Williamson and Sophia, his wife, for defaming the said Sophia in a public congregation without cause; by which the said William Williamson is damaged One Thousand Pounds Sterling." It was unthinkable. The Rector of Epworth might languish in Lincoln Gaol and Susanna send her rings to ease his penury, but what would she say to her Brand plucked from the burning? That £1,000 had an ugly look when John Wesley and Delamotte had but one shilling between them up to date.

Then next day Wesley was arrested and faced a jury of his parishioners, whom he believed represented justice no more than the famous jury of Bunyan's *Vanity Fair*. But in this he was led astray by his own prejudice, for the true bills they kept bringing in against him had in reality much to be said for them. In the irony of fate it was now this *Vanity Fair* jury-box which believed itself the champion of religion against John Wesley himself. In the list of its grievances it stated "That whereas the colony of Georgia is composed of a mixed number of Christian members of the Church of England and Dissenters, who all or part would attend divine ordinances and communicate with a faithful pastor of the Established Church: The Reverend Mr. John

Wesley, who for the most part serves the cure of Savannah, has not, as the law directs, emitted any declaration in this place of his adherence to the principles of the Church of England. We have the more reason to complain of grievances that the said reverend person (as we humbly conceive) deviates from the principles and regulations of the Established Church in many particulars inconsistent with the happiness and prosperity of this colony as”

There followed twelve of the reverend person's faults, which have the ring of truth about them, as “By introducing into the Church and service at the Altar compositions of psalms and hymns not inspected or authorized by any proper judicature; by restricting the benefit of the Lord's Supper to a small number of persons and refusing it to all others who will not conform to a grievous set of penances, confessions, mortifications and constant attendances of early and late hours of prayer, very inconsistent with the labor and employment of the colony. By venting sundry and uncharitable expressions of all who differ from him, and not pronouncing the Benediction in Church until all the hearers except his own communicants are withdrawn.”

It was true that the discipline of the Church of England needed tightening up, for there were too many of Miss Austen's Mr. Collinses about in the eighteenth century, and matters ecclesiastical were notoriously slack. But it was equally true that John Wesley had not found the way to reformation, and

indeed he never would find that way as long as he insisted on sinning against his heart.

The trial dragged on and things were at a deadlock as Wesley refused to answer any of the ecclesiastical clauses in such profane surroundings. But he did not like the look of the secular attack either in that his pursuit of Miss Sophy was being proclaimed from the house-tops. The time had clearly come for him to fly for his life. It was impossible for *Vanity Fair* to understand the absolute restraint and holiness of his friendship with Miss Sophy. It sounded most horribly compromising in that hateful court and on everybody's gossiping lips.

Like some baited creature at bay Wesley stood in the great square of Savannah and read with horror a notice to restrain him from leaving the town and forbidding any man to help him so to do. But such a notice was not able to frighten the faithful Delamotte. He had begged Wesley not to embark on his grand reprisal against Miss Sophy, although the lad bore no love towards the lady himself. He had the boy's healthy reaction of the old school tie, and could see more clearly than Wesley, with his love-clouded eyes, that such an action was not that of a sportsman or a hero. But again, now that his idol was so pitifully exposing his clay feet, Delamotte resolutely shut his eyes and helped to plan his escape. Ten pounds had come in from England as from the hand of God, and this would suffice for the passage money. The next thing was to elude pursuit, and the conspirators planned a get-away into the forest and so to the coast.

Delamotte would come by boat with books and parchments and meet the fugitive at Charleston, where he might take ship for England. They must have admitted one woman to the plot, but mercifully she was sound and knew how to keep a secret. It was she who, like Martha, thought of food and provided a large gingerbread to be stuffed into the pocket and eaten on the journey.

What were Wesley's thoughts that evening as he took prayers for the last time at Savannah and then slipped quietly and unobserved into the trackless forests? He almost at once lost his way and beat up and down an unblazed trail or tore his flesh on giant brambles fighting his way to freedom. But on he went in the energy of despair, and ever as he fought his bosom was cleaned of that perilous stuff that weighed upon the heart. All his faculties were functioning again. It was he who found water; it was he who made a neat scout trail of broken twigs which saved him from going only round in circles; it was he who prayed and slept all night in the open and woke up refreshed. Once he roasted potatoes at a Negro's fire, and surely their taste was sweet. Torn and bruised and hungry but alive he made contact with Delamotte at last, and on Christmas Eve sailed over Charleston Bar. He said he shook off the dust of Georgia from his feet, but he hardly had so much energy left in him, for he was more dead than alive as he lay in his bunk on the good ship *Samuel* and contemplated the dreary timbers above his head.

It only remained for Delamotte to return to the

empty bungalow with his memories and the weight of his own loneliness. Silent was the flute. Low lay the French books. The love songs had quite died away. He was only a young man and he had no return ticket to England. He had to borrow fifteen pounds from George Whitefield in the next June ere he could follow his hero home again. What did he think of Wesley as he sat in that place of memories in that forsaken bungalow alone with his long, long thoughts? He had forsaken mother and friends and country for his hero, and now he was himself forsaken. They had never as much as reached the Indians, and there had been some strange deeds done here in the name of God's love. Perhaps it was some consolation to Delamotte to be rid of Miss Sophy for good, but the house was strangely silent now and his mother was far away across estranging seas. He really did not know where the next meal was to come from, but surely he was the first of the Mark Tapleys on American soil with his gallant: "My not knowing at one meal where I shall get the next is a great help to thankfulness." Moreover, upon Delamotte's innocent head had descended all the spite of the enemies which his master had escaped by running away. And yet he was still Wesley's "son in Christ," and dutiful at that. It is surely to the eternal credit of Delamotte that in this darkest hour, like Varro of the Republic, so he also did not despair of John Wesley.

XVIII

DOWN AND OUT

THE forests of Georgia had nearly strangled the life out of Delamotte's hero. The thorns had torn living flesh and he had fought like a madman to escape, beating up and down in that tangled wilderness with no man to show the way. Now he was on board ship, but no less in a spiritual wilderness and without one glimpse of Sinai. Wesley lay still in his bunk and cared for nothing more on earth. He might just as well have been in a floating coffin, for he had lost interest in everything, and the very last thing he wanted to see was a human being to whom he must preach. He did not believe he could ever "speak close" to any of his flock again.

William Law had considered this trip to America as the wildness of some scatterbrain, and he had told Wesley roundly: "Sir, I perceive you would convert the world. You must wait God's own good time." But Susanna's son was not accustomed to sit with folded hands awaiting some far-off Divine event. His mother's plan had always been to keep the children busy, and her remedy for a broken heart had been "a regular and exact performance of present duty." She had had literally to work out her own salvation, and had taken the Kingdom of Heaven by force. The Scriptures might say that flesh and blood

could not inherit that Kingdom, but both Susanna Wesley and her son would make a tremendous effort of human virility to climb those heights.

Now all that effort of muscle and sinew had failed, all the love of a human heart had been betrayed, and all the ceaseless pounding of grey matter in the spiral ascent of the Holy Club had but plunged John Wesley farther into the abyss. To add to all his misery he was most lamentably sea-sick. Now the whole business of life and religion seemed to him stale, flat and unprofitable as he lay on board the *Samuel* and heaved but with the heaving deep. Never in his ordered little life had he felt anything like this before. That driving, steady mind of his was spinning round in circles. The Methodist was the Methodist no longer, for he had lost his sense of direction. Every prop had been knocked from under him, and he had now neither pride, rule, nor friendship to gird up the loins of his mind. Three times a mere woman had turned him down, and Brother Samuel had told him he doubted he would make nothing of that province of life being disappointed in one match. All his assurance was gone. He was apprehensively nervous of life after all his mother's drillings and wisdom, for he had been running on accumulated capital, and now, left to himself, he was bankrupt. He must have known when he conducted his last punctilious prayers that night in Savannah, with his eye on the tide and the way into the forest, that he had failed. The staff of his religion had broken in his hand. The Holy Club was vanquished. In spite of a soul-shat-

tering effort it had failed in the rough and tumble of life. The colonists of Georgia had said it was not suited to the needs of a new colony, and they but spoke the truth, for it was too academic for brute man and brute nature. After all was said and done it had come out of a college quad and out of a scholar's monkish cell.

Wesley, in his heart of hearts, knew that he too was a failure, and added to that uncomfortable realization was the knowledge that he had been blundering and cruel. That scene in the church at Savannah must have been imprinted on his memory in sinister outline. There must have stood the beautiful young wife put to shame before a whole congregation and put to shame by himself—to save his own horrid pride. The thought was unpleasing and it hurt his mind. It even made him know what sin could be, real sin, not the fancy kind of breaking Church rules and non-observance of the Sabbath Day. This sin painted hideous pictures of unkindness in the brain and made terrible cleavage with love. The flames of hell were roaring again in Wesley's ears, for the protection of the Holy Club and the innate goodness of his own heart had entirely broken down.

At the back of all the Wesleys stalked that hard old Calvinism of the Dissenters. The God of Cromwell would have them in the end. There was a way to Hell from the very gates of Heaven, and there was no guarantee of safety for an inch of the journey of life. After all, the humanism of old Sam Wesley was but an acquired taste. Let the rain descend and

the floods come, and, rushing up from that old Dissenting past, would intrude that fear at the heart with its strangle-hold of death. X All across the Atlantic and up to the Lizard and under Beachy Head a phrase of a poem kept drumming in Wesley's head. It spoke such haunting words and they kept on having their say and seemed the warp and woof of the stuff of his mind:

"I have a sin of fear that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore."

Roaring winds and leaping waves and passengers and ship's company were not real at all compared with that unmasked reality of hell. The words of all the service books seemed jargon only. Wesley supposed he never again could feel that confidence of the priest with power to administer the mysteries of God. He felt now nothing better than a cunningly devised fable himself, and began to believe that he had given up friends and comfort and prosperity all for the shadow of a shade. Besides this cheerless philosophy there was the consciousness that he must meet the all too real trustees of Georgia and explain why he had run away as Jonah from Nineveh. It would take some explaining, and it was bad to think of for one so weak as he was now. To look back to America broke his heart, but to look forward to England sent that shattered heart down into his boots with fear. Those roaring flames of hell would preclude the hope of any escape by bare bodkin methods

or the easier possibility of the castaway in mid-ocean, but it is clear that this voyage of Wesley in the *Samuel* was the time of his darkest hour.

On that stricken ship, so divertingly named, help came from the most unexpected quarter, but it came along the lines of Susanna Wesley's own salvation in a cheerless world. That miserable unchin of the seas, the cabin boy, put in an appearance. He was young, and his miserable little person called aloud for instruction. He was a potential pupil for any school, and he acted on John Wesley like a tonic. Arising from that melancholy horizontal position he seized on the lad and began to teach him, as though his life hung on it as surely his sanity did. There in the midst of the ocean of doubt, lost in mazes of High Church, Presbyterian, Moravian, and Mystic theology, a lost scrap of humanity was Wesley's salvation. There in the dusky face before him Wesley read that great patience of the lost children of Ham. Wesley, with all his pride in ruins, dare speak to such a one for he would listen. Those old Bible tales could not be bettered for such a scholar, and so over-board went the intricacies of Holy Club and à Kempis, and the Word of God was the only possibility in such a situation. The Bible alone was simple enough for the two strange wayfarers whom fortune had served so ill and thrown together so strangely on the high seas.

So the Dissenting past had its own way with John Wesley and held him like a sheet anchor in storms which were rolling round his soul. The dusky children of sorrow had helped him before in his flight to

Charleston, for they had let him roast potatoes in their bonfire when he was starving. They were to reap a great reward in the breaking of the dawn, for their emancipation was to be at the hands of that little hunted priest who had eaten their humble fare and taught one of the least of their brethren stories of Jesus in a stuffy cabin on the high seas. A shred of John Wesley's old confidence returned when the cabin boy brought another Negro to hear the Bible tales all of his own accord. These two Africans were the forerunners of the thousands of Wesley's world parish which would later press upon him for the Word of Life, but this congregation was worth its weight in gold for the sake of the preacher himself. These two dusky children of sorrow lent him their patience and their love until he could stand on his feet again and face the rest of the ship's company. The Great Revival of Religion was saved there in the hull of the sailing-ship *Samuel* as she butted her way across the Atlantic in January days. Susanna Wesley's favorite verse from George Herbert looked as though it was to be fulfilled literally in those children of a savage slavery who stood by her son in his dark hour:

"Only since God doth often make
Of lowly matter for high uses meet,
I throw me at His feet;
There will I lie until my Maker seek
For some mean stuff whereon to show his skill;
then is my time."

But what a contrast it all was to that voyage outward on the *Simmonds*. Then the Wesley brothers were strong and determined, then they would convert the world, then they would pursue the sinner to within an inch of his life. Then their quarry was Dr. and Mrs. Hawkins and General Oglethorpe and Mrs. Welch, but now the constellation of the great twin brethren had set beyond the distant rim of the farthest horizon. Now even Brother Charles was at a loose end. On his first return to England, he enjoyed himself in all the glory of the pioneer missionary and had been feted and had hob-nobbed with the aristocracy in quite his father's vein. Archbishops, bishops, Lord and Lady Oxford, Lady Cox and Count Zinzendorf had all been interested to hear of Georgia and of real Red Indians, and Charles Wesley had been able to shine in their reflected glory and forget Dr. Hawkins and the tempest of the wrath of Oglethorpe. He had even had the privilege of interviewing the King himself at Hampton Court. Aspasia and Varanese had both received him kindly for old time's sake, and he had seen his mother and had one dispute at least with his sister-in-law at Tiverton. He had lost his temper again, it is true, when his brother's honest *Journal* from Georgia arrived, and he had denounced Brother John as a simpleton for falling into the difficulties which he had himself created by his own folly in the affair of Oglethorpe and that group of viragoes. He stood fuming inwardly outside the door while the Committee read the words of truthful John, and when he was bade

to speak later he could scarcely summon up voice enough to make the gentlemen hear what he was saying. He tried to regain something of his old confidence by raking together the burnt-out ashes of the fires of the Holy Club, and kept advising everyone to read William Law in season and out of season. He got some sort of excitement out of preaching on "there be few that be saved" and he made a little girl cry and a young man run mad with his exhortations. Mrs. Delamotte, thoroughly angry with him and his brother for taking her Charles to Georgia, withstood him to the face, and even William Law himself could not bear with him for a moment. He might almost have been Oglethorpe and not William Law, the Master of the Oxford Methodists, with the abrupt termination which he put to the interview. Charles Wesley found himself the wrong side of the door with this remark rapped out in sheer desperation after his plea "that he might at least write to the prophet": "Nothing I can either speak or write will do you any good."

Charles Wesley was in the condition of restlessness and irritability which Susanna had long come to recognize in her husband. It sprang from the same source of that inner discontent with self and a haunting memory of a past one could not lay by the heels. People would keep on asking Charles if he was going back to Georgia, and of course he professed vehemently that he was, while all the time his heart misgave him. At last he took refuge in the inevitable collapse after dashing about the country falling off

his horse and getting lost and being robbed by a highwayman. The shadow of Georgia through all these adventures could not be shaken off, and at last the authorities talked as though it were only three weeks away and a shadow no longer.

The return of Brother John with his sober estimate of the difficulties of the situation further stole what little thunder remained to his younger brother and made it abundantly clear that it was time to take to one's bed. It was at Oxford that Charles Wesley collapsed with the most appalling toothache. He was even driven to the noxious weed, tobacco, to relieve his misery. The consequences were, of course, inevitable that he should experience sorrow upon sorrow, for it made him lamentably sick. A pain in his side made him convinced he must die, and yet he lingered to the morning. He was able to draw enough attention to himself in the way his father had enjoyed, for John was summoned to his bedside and Sister Kezzy had to do a hand's turn in the sick-room.

John had had only one day with his mother, but he went most dutifully to attend his dying brother and shoulder once again the difficulties which this mercurial brother of his was always creating. But there was someone else at that bedside who was not half so sympathetic. His name was Peter Böhler and he came from Moravia. It seemed that John Wesley was not even now to be allowed to lick his wounds in secret away from those old burning memories. The fatal months of March and April were drawing on and here he was back at Oxford again, and at his

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old barren game of resolution-making all by himself. He had sacrificed everything for his religion and now was left without so much as a flutter of consolation. His religion itself had died on him. That man of God, Peter Böhler, told him plainly that he was no better than an unbeliever after all his desperate endeavors after righteousness. If he had thought to save himself from the Puritan's Hell by his good works he might know himself tragically mistaken. Nothing in the world but faith could possibly do him any good—why, his very good deeds needed an atonement in themselves! So, from the tossing of the main, John Wesley had returned to walk again the streets of Oxford with a mind in tempest and the veriest Prospero in the shape of the Moravian Böhler close at his elbow. It began to look as though, after all his pious endeavors, he was little better than a lost soul if Prospero were true. He had the spirit to retort on this Moravian avenger: "If what stands in the Bible is true then am I saved." But relentlessly Böhler kept him to the point of that command which once horrified Nicodemus in the depths of the night in Palestine—"Ye must be born again."

The Moravian theme now was the incomprehensible, insane one of instantaneous conversion. Wesley did not believe such things possible or desirable—how can these things be? And yet as he searched his Bible again he found every conversion there recorded was an instantaneous one. Beaten out of that retreat, he asked Böhler for tangible evidence of such a miracle in present-day life and was told that the

Moravian could bring down a whole team of changed lives to convince him. But it was all too unreasonable for honest John, and he betook himself to his own rooms and sat him down to write out the whole history of Miss Sophy and his own heart, for that, at least, was real. He wrote it all so carefully so that he that runs could read, and his mother especially should not stumble over any detail of her son's history. He would always go to her in trouble and she would tell him the reasonable solution, even though Charles had called him away before he could get the story told. His mother should read the whole tale and judge for herself. So the manuscript remains transcribed in Oxford on that fatal day of March 12, 1738, which was the first anniversary day of the wedding of Miss Sophy. In that city he had often communed with his own heart. In that College of Lincoln he had waited for Aspasia's letters and dreamed in the moonlight. In Oxford he had drawn that line of finality in his diary after the wedding of Varanese and had asked, "Have I loved women or company more than God?" Now he writes across the page of his story of Miss Sophy the legend, "A brand snatched out of the fire." It may have been to reassure his mother, it may have been in the nature of a pious hope, but whatever it was the words were eloquent of a fear which had been buried in his mind when the crackling flames of Epworth Rectory had roared about him in childhood's days. In his heart of hearts he was afraid of fire. It had been drilled into him all his life that he had just escaped from some dreadful

material conflagration which in some inexplicable way was linked with his eternal salvation. These women and the feelings they aroused in him had the quality of fire and inhibited him from ever being at ease with them. They seemed to fight with God for the possession of his soul, and, should he once yield to them, down into hell he must surely go.

So with a heart that loved them and a soul that shunned, John Wesley showed all the marks of his mother's perfect scholar. It looked as though he would never find peace within himself in the wilderness of this world, although he sought it painfully with tears. His heart was breaking with those memories which he had remorselessly stirred up in order to write them all down in his account of Miss Sophy, for he had spared himself nothing in the telling. He was always accustomed to see the faces of his friends as he wrote to them, and so must her ghost have haunted his rooms at Lincoln College, so must she have stepped lightly with him across that Lincoln quad and climbed the stairs again to his old refuge of an empty room and a barren note-book. Could he drive her face away from before his eyes with that flourish of a bitter pen—"a brand snatched out of the fire"? But for what had he been saved? This Peter Böhler was telling him that after all the sacrifice and the fear he really was not saved at all. So witnessed the team from London who stood there in Oxford, the first of Oxford groups, to tell John Wesley just how, when and where they had been changed in a twinkling of an eye. Confuted by these witnesses and driven out

of all faith in good works, the Brand plucked from the burning was a pitiable case. He closed their painful confessions in a characteristic way, for he was very lonely and here in this first Oxford group was at least the nucleus of a German choir—would they please sing him one of their own hymns before they left him to Sophy and his bachelor rooms? That strange little band of Moravians struck up the song of the lover's dead heart and John Wesley was seen to dash the tears from his eyes. It was now April 23 and the cuckoo's song was already sounding from the Cotswold Hills, but the glory had all departed. John Wesley sobbed his way through the hymn which he had himself translated and re-fashioned by Miss Sophy's side:

“My soul before Thee prostrate lies,
To Thee, her source, my spirit flies;
My wants I mourn, my chains I see:
O let Thy presence set me free!

Jesu, vouchsafe my heart and will
With Thy meek lowliness to fill;
No more her power let Nature boast,
But in Thy will may mine be lost.

When my warm'd thoughts I fix on Thee
And plunge me in Thy mercy's sea,
Then even on me Thy face shall shine,
And quicken this dead heart of mine.”

XIX

LIFE - CHANGERS

SUSANNA WESLEY and her spouse had not agreed over many things in their lives, but Samuel had a way of coming round to her point of view later on and with assured dignity, as though, all the time, it had been his own opinion. Their two sons were to play the same role over this all-important matter of conversion. In spite of Charles Wesley's horror at John for coquetting with such an idea among that first of Oxford Group teams he was himself to be the first to experience Pentecost.

There was a great argument at the Delamottes' house at Blendon, and Charles Wesley had lost his temper badly and flounced out of the room. The bone of contention was the suddenness or otherwise of conversion, and although it seems a strange thing to dispute over, the Wesleys could argue over anything and grow very warm in a spate of words. And it really was a matter of importance as the whole of the Holy Club religion of the two brothers had been built up on the opposite theory of conversion. The inevitability of gradualness had been its gospel, and the safeguards had been forged of prayer, of fasting and good works to secure it. In the Holy Club the pilgrims were roped together to cut each step of the ascending way and to save one another from falling

by that rope of self-discipline. It was an entirely reasonable theory and suitable to an eighteenth-century view of life which called a spade a spade and knew and condoned the primitive savage in man. But the Moravians taught a religion of unreason. Their pilgrims, in the slippery paths of youth, threw themselves on God, and in that leap of faith managed to land on their feet. It was a fiercely personal religion, and it talked of the Lamb a great deal more than it spoke of the unknowable God-head. Christ undertook the whole of the adventure of life for the pilgrim. His love and His friendship were so real as to make sin distasteful to the devotee. With Him religion meant a falling in love. The world and sin had no more that they could do against one who had found the anchorage of the wounds of Christ. The Guide with the bleeding hands and feet would go on before and scale the mountain of life—there always with His followers.

This view-point was as different from Holy Club doctrine as it could well be, and it made Charles Wesley very angry. He must have distrusted those Moravian hymns which Brother John had translated in Georgia, for in them the heresy was complete:

“Now I have found the ground wherein
 Sure my soul’s anchor may remain—
 The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
 Before the world’s foundation slain;
 Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,
 When heaven and earth are fled away.”

Was it just a retreat from reality or a desperate effort to get the better of the sin of the world? It had the advantage of working where the Holy Club safety apparatus broke down.

That was the point which John Wesley maintained. Beaten out of all his retreats, he began to work his way obstinately through history and Bible literature to test this theme, "sudden conversion," by facts. To his amazement he found there was no other sort of conversion as much as named save this dramatic falling-in-love event of the Moravian gospel. So obstinately he argued with Brother Charles and quite scandalized Mrs. Delamotte and all pious eighteenth-century opinion. This would never do when England was looked on, even by France, as the most reasonable country in the world. It savored of barbarism and of fanatical hotheads who had very rightly been burned at the stake for their very horrid enthusiasm.

Charles Wesley could hear the blaring ram's horn of Dissent in this latest madness of his brother, and feared he set at naught the Sacraments, and yet for all his anger he was the first to experience the reality of this very thing itself—this unreasonable, barbarian, sudden conversion! Appropriately enough it happened in the month of May in 1738. Charles Wesley was ill again and stranded in Little Britain near St. Pauls at the house of Mr. Bray, "a poor ignorant mechanic who knows nothing but Christ."

The house was a center for praying saints who, there, in those humble surroundings, were wrapt away from the material world in this strange new ec-

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stasy of the love of Christ. There visions and miracles were the realities of life. The language of heaven was their current coin. And the brethren and the sisters were all praying for the conversion of Charles Wesley. The air was electric and the atmosphere congenial, for he felt himself the center of excitement and the focal point of deep appreciation. Peter Böhler had brow-beaten him on his sick-bed at Oxford and had produced no result at all, but this atmosphere of sympathetic urgency was much more stimulating to a poetic soul. Charles Wesley was not ignorant of that pleasant realization that these humble people considered him a key man in their campaign of salvation. It was laid on the heart of one sister to speak words to Charles which she had received from God in a vision, but she dreaded the deed and went about sorrowfully clasping the secret to her breast. It seemed too daring to speak to a priest of the Church of England about his soul. Meanwhile, Mr. Bray had stabbed open a Bible and read the story of the Sick of the Palsy, and he exhorted Charles Wesley to trust the faith of his friends if he had none himself, for Christ had healed that other sick man "when He saw their faith."

So lay the stricken Charles thinking and fevered and sore. So lay Charles, hearing, as sick people will, every sound in the house. Suddenly he heard a voice, speaking so strangely and pitched in so queer a key, that it sounded as though it might come from below or from above, for no man could say certainly from whence it came. He asked his friends if Mrs. Mus-

grave had returned, for likely enough it was she coming in to get the meals, for even saints must be fed. They told him that she was still abroad, and his heart took a wild leap of hope. What if it were "Christ indeed"? With hurried excitement Charles Wesley sawed on the bellrope at his bed head. Surely his nonchalance could go no further than ringing to ascertain if the Lord had come.

It was time for Mrs. Turner, that sister with the hidden message, to declare herself. It had been she speaking the words, but, so frightened was she, that her voice had quavered and rippled away beyond her control. She had spoken in a voice, no longer her own, close to Charles Wesley's bedroom door, and this was the prophetic utterance: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and believe and thou shalt be healed of all thine infirmities."

Charles Wesley saw something very lovely in that God had thought of him, and sent his messenger to heal him. It was the very cure he needed—to be loved again, to be appreciated again, to be cared about and watched over. How he had hated Oglethorpe and his hard manliness! What terribly angular women those viragoes of Georgia had been! Now it was a May morning and the Day of Pentecost, and all was emphatically right with Charles Wesley's world. He sprang from his sick-bed a changed man. Feverishly he seized a Bible to confirm the message from Heaven, and the first words his eyes lighted upon were strangely prophetic and spoke language dear to the

heart of a poet: "He hath put a new song in thy mouth."

It was to be literally fulfilled, for Charles Wesley was to be the sweet singer of the Great Revival. He would enlarge and electrify that slender little hymn-book which his brother had made by Miss Sophy's side in Georgia. His conversion gave him just enough uplift to float him on the poetic wave and just enough abandon to forget himself. He had made verse before, as every son of old Sam Wesley must, but he had got little further than the point of being stuffed with other people's poetry and of bursting into quotation at all odd moments. It is true that beautiful Anne Granville had praised his efforts in the old Stanton days and had pronounced his verses, in true eighteenth-century language, "quite charming." But here was something more than charm. Here was something elemental that rushed up from the depths and got itself said in words of ecstasy. He never waited for the emotion to be recollected in tranquillity, but pounded it all out then hot and strong from his heart and stuck the opening chord for the Revival of Religion in England with that rapturous question of his:

"Where shall my wondering soul begin?
 How shall I all to heaven aspire?
 A slave redeemed from death and sin,
 A brand plucked from eternal fire,
 How shall I equal triumphs raise
 Or sound my great Deliverer's praise?"

He says that pride had him, almost at the start, grinning and preening himself there amidst his riotous lines of poetry, but for once he was strong enough to give it the knock-out blow and proceed with his ecstasies. It must have been those words of the burning brand that jerked him back to earth, for it was assuredly not Charles Wesley who was the Brand plucked from the burning. In his secret heart he must always have wished that he had been indeed that family brand plucked from the burning on that historic night of the Epworth fire. Then, ignominiously he had been carried to safety, in a nursemaid's arms, because he could not yet "go" on his tottering feet. It had always given John a sort of unfair pre-eminence over his younger brother, so that now it was with a certain sense of satisfaction that Charles cut in before that strange elder brother of his, and in his new enthusiasm appropriated his very birth-right. But in one moment the world and pre-eminence were well lost again for Charles Wesley in the rapture of the discovery of the love of Christ. It was a thing to humble even a Wesley in the dust, and it had slung the arrogance of the Holy Club to the gutter:

"Outcasts of men, to you I call,
 Harlots, and publicans, and thieves!
 He spreads His arms to embrace you all;
 Sinners alone His grace receives:
 No need of him the righteous have;
 He came the lost to seek and save.

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Come, O my guilty brethren, come,
Groaning beneath your load of sin!
His bleeding heart shall make you room,
His open side shall take you in;
He calls you now, invites you home:
Come, O my guilty brethren, come."

It was unreasonable, but it worked. It worked marvelously above all one could ask or think. Let a common harlot once believe that and she was safe where'er she walked. Let the condemned prisoner know that gospel and he could face Tyburn with tears only of joy, for he knew he dropped but into the arms of Love. Ejaculatory prayer every hour of the day and fasts all the year round could not achieve what the love of Christ wrought in a moment of time. Here at last was the gospel for which the outcasts of men were dying. Here was color, emotion, life, and victory. To souls bound fast in the dungeon of Giant Despair, with the shackles of John Calvin upon them, such a gospel of liberation broke all the prison bars. Flames of hell, eternal damnation, the nightmare of the reprobate, all were conquered in that unconquerable Love of God. At the heart of old Calvinistic England the warmth of spring thawed away fear. At the center of life and mystery a God smiled. England turned from craven fear to that lighter burden of glorious love. Death was swallowed up in victory. Charles Wesley's hymns taught all fearful souls to go to meet God singing: "O could I catch one smile from Thee and drop into Eternity." The far-off

terrible Jove of the thunderbolt and the fire became Jesus—"Lover of my soul."

The hymns of Charles Wesley were sung all over England. Inevitably the Muse of poetry slipped away from Court and fashion and took up its piping in shepherd's cot and stone-mason's cottage. That song swept the reason of the eighteenth century in ruin before it and in its place brought in the laughter and the tears of the age of Romanticism. Old Sam Wesley's jingles could not do it, nor could Hetty's sorrowful strains accomplish that revolution. But the peculiar quality of the passion of Charles Wesley's verse and the chorus of saved sinners who sang it, in rapture thawed out the very heart of England. The land was tired of reason and sterility, and thousands of her sons were feeling like Charles Wesley, but his glory was that he could sing their inarticulate desire. A thousand hearts were hungering for love, and here they found what they longed for in full measure, pressed down and running over. "Suddenly everyone burst out singing." It was a joy which broke the heart and sent tears coursing down the cheeks in a strange mingling of emotions. Love of God—sin of man—but victory through the Blood of the Lamb—must one laugh or cry? The world looked on and wondered. It saw tears washing the faces of the begrimed miners in the King's Wood, Bristol, and it noted the white channels of those tears and marveled. Before, such men had been the terror of all sedate citizens and had marched into Bristol murdering and rioting and looting shops for food. Now like so many

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lambs they followed the sweet singer, Charles Wesley, to Holy Communion in Temple Church. It was as true a miracle as ever Christ worked on the man amid the tombs of Gadara when, clothed and in his right mind, he sat down at Jesus' feet. Now these wild men of the woods were crooning songs of love, and behold and see gentleness as of the little child! They wept as they sang and looked into the face of Christ on Calvary's Tree:

"O let me kiss Thy bleeding feet,
And bathe and wash them with my tears,
The story of Thy love repeat
In every drooping sinner's ears,
That all may hear the quickening sound,
Since I, even I, have mercy found."

Charles Wesley insisted upon claiming his old friend William Law as the John the Baptist of the Methodist Revival of Religion. But it is safe to say that the author of "the Serious Call," that voice crying in the wilderness of eighteenth-century England, could never have recognized himself as the forerunner of this more than Corybantic religion. It partook rather of the color and imagery of those Moravian hymns of love which John Wesley had discovered and Charles Wesley had appropriated. But the distinctive quality of the songs of Methodism was due, in the first place, to all such combustible material being forced through the susceptible heart of the youngest son of old Samuel Wesley.

XX

HEART WARMING

It was May 24, 1738, and John Wesley was walking slowly away from St. Paul's Cathedral. Not for him were the ecstasies of his younger brother. He had been depressed for days on end, and whether it was the spring, or the Georgia Trustees, or the consciousness of failure in the center of his soul, the times were sadly out of joint. There was nothing in the politics of his country to stimulate his enthusiasm, for England was being kept well to the safety first rule of the road under that most reasonable of Prime Ministers, Robert Walpole. Gone were those wondrous days when Cavalier and Roundhead clashed together with the honors even between God and the King. Gone were the days when men spoke and prayed in Parliament as though they did the Lord service. England had settled down to make money and to bank down the hidden fires, and it looked very much as though there remained no scope for Susanna Wesley's son and the Brand plucked from the burning. The last thing that Prime Minister Walpole wanted was the outbreak of any sort of fire.

The notes of Purcell's anthem in St. Paul's were dying on Ludgate Hill, and as they floated away over the house-tops they twisted the heartstrings of

John Wesley with a strange sadness. Those pure notes were beating in his mind as on some familiar spinet: "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord God, hear my prayer." They had all been so fond of Purcell in those golden days in the Cotswolds, and Aspasia had played divinely on the harpsichord. They had even all stood up and danced the stately minuet, and Purcell was not above writing that sort of music also. The old strains must have sung themselves again to him, so wistfully, as John Wesley walked down Ludgate Hill. They had danced at the wedding of Varanese, and there was all that weight of sadness again at his heart as he walked and wondered. Then had been golden dreams that would not be denied, but now the world of grey old London wrapped him about in despair. He had lost a good deal of sleep by sitting up with his brother at the beginning of his illness, and now that he had recovered in that instantaneous fashion and outstripped him in this matter of conversion John was left lonely indeed and tired out into the bargain.

It was in this mood that a friend met him with an invitation to come to a meeting of a religious society in Aldersgate Street that night. It was the last thing in the world that John Wesley wanted to do, for nothing now seemed real to him in this strange business of religion but those haunting notes of despair from the organ of St. Paul's. He confessed that to more meetings and more religion he went "very unwillingly." Yet salvation for him, too, was round only the next corner in the road. In Aldersgate Street that

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night all heaven came down to meet the son of Susanna Wesley. Unaware of straying angels, he loitered into the stuffy little room and listened with the others to the reading from Luther's introduction to the Epistle to the Romans, and it was just in that reading that his spirit was stabbed broad awake. The truth was that the tide of History was setting in through that arid little room and John Wesley was directly in its path. As Luther had toiled terribly to save himself, so had Wesley. As the German monk had climbed laboriously the sacred steps at Rome, so had Wesley ascended in spirit the awful steepes of heaven, and at the end both had known that they could never thus compass their hearts' desire or wash away one sin for all their toil. Luther had stood up like a man on those steps up which he had crawled on hands and knees, and through the pearly air of Rome had heard the challenge of Paul of Tarsus: "The just shall live by faith." Wesley heard the same words so long afterwards in a little room in London when it was towards evening and the day was far spent, and he almost gasped in astonishment: "What, have we then nothing to do?" "No! Nothing! But only accept of Him who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

To tell John Wesley he had nothing to do in this herculean task of religion was like bidding the patient relax before analysis. With his taut little frame unbraced and his heart quite empty the love of God came in like a flood. He knew and felt deep down in his being that his sins, which were many, were all

forgiven. There was a sin of pride, a sin of fear, and well he knew that other hateful sin against love that had made him act like a madman in Georgia. Now the love of God had come in to purify and cover every spot of unkindness in the soul of the sinner, and what the law could not do had been done once for all on Calvary. So Wesley's *Journal* records that momentous transaction of May 24, 1738: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Susanna Wesley had been right after all, for it was really all a question of fire and firebrands. It had all begun in the light of the soldiers' camp fires on the hill outside the city wall at Jerusalem. Flames had flickered upon saintly heads in an upper room in that old town, and in Rome had lighted up Nero's garden with the light of burning martyrs. Westward that flame had glowed around poor priest and Lollard of fourteenth-century England, and from them the fires had roared into the faggots around the body of John Hus. In that awful bonfire he had lightened the Moravians, and Luther had greeted the blaze from afar. The monk of Erfurt had, in his turn, taken up the torch and lighted with it the fires in Smithfield

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Market. So close were they to the little room in Aldersgate that John Wesley could not hope to escape the general conflagration. From that little room the flames swept on until America, India, and the islands of the sea sang of this same "refining fire."

The songs of the people called Methodists are strangely full of fire, for they are the songs of the people of the warmed heart:

"See how great a flame aspires,
Kindled by a spark of grace!
Jesus' love the nations fires,
Sets the kingdoms on a blaze.
To bring fire on earth He came;
Kindled in some hearts it is:
O that all might catch the flame,
All partake the glorious bliss!"

The fire motif again! Strange that that should be the way that salvation came. Wesley had told Miss Sophy that he dared not take fire into his bosom lest he should be burned, and he had kept the God that answers by fire at an equal distance with equal caution. Now fire had fallen from heaven and yet he was not consumed. He had pleaded with Aspasia in those old romantic days in Oxford: "Tell me if it be a fault that my heart burns within me when I reflect on the many marks of regard you have already shown." But to feel like that about God! Dare he? Could he? There round his heart was that strange warmth. It was just that glorious thing called love, there, at

the very soul of his being. Here was no reasoned argument for God's existence, no desperate fight for cold morality, but here was the inspiration and the glory of passion—"I felt my heart strangely warmed." Now this John Wesley had been so frightened of fire. The crackling and the roar of Susanna's exhortations had never left him. Was he not always the Brand plucked from the burning on that awful night of old confusion and trouble at Epworth long ago? Now in the strangest way the Divine Analyst had resolved the complex in that very element of fervent heat—"I felt my heart strangely warmed." There was something in it of the sunshine of the Cotswold Hills, something of the à Kempis pattern, something of home, a hint of western seas—but more, far more, than these. He saw no man any longer save Jesus only, and when he awoke next morning he was still with Christ.

John Wesley's immediate reaction to daylight and the toils of a new day was "Jesus, Master." So he waked with the password of his own great campaign on his lips after that night of purification, and ever afterwards his myriad followers would name the date of May 24, 1738, with reverence. He had kept many sorrowful dates in his diary before, but now he had done with the old style. A new day had dawned for John Wesley, and incidentally for England and for America beyond the seas. Whatever men may make of conversion, however psychologists may explain the varieties of religious experience, something happened to John Wesley that night to transform him into a

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leader of men.) He had failed hopelessly in the new colony of Georgia on his first mission, now he had an evangel that was simply cut out for backwoodsmen. At the time of England's colonial expansion there was the gospel ready to march with the flag. It needed no cassock, no priest, no altar, but warmed hearts and that indwelling Mystic Presence. Where Christ is, there is the Church. So it is but fitting that at the heart of the Empire, there in the swirling roar of London, a little brass plate should mark the place of this strange heart-warming of two hundred years ago. It is nailed to Barclay's Bank in Aldersgate Street and reads thus: "The probable site where on May 24, 1738, John Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed. This experience of grace was the beginning of Methodism. This tablet is gratefully placed here by the Drew Theological Seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Madison, New Jersey, U. S. A." So Aldersgate Street had made amends for Georgia, and so had come about the miracle of God's own good time.

XXI

DEATH OF SUSANNA

THE mother of the Wesleys had lived to see the beginning of the great revival of religion at the hands of her sons. She had stood on Kennington Common and listened to John as he preached to the laden souls who pressed upon him for salvation. She had attended the means of grace at his new meeting-house in The Moorfields, and there at the Foundery she had taken up her abode. It was to be the last caravanseria before she traveled on into the world of light. She had helped to keep the two boys sane in a rush of emotion and Moravian vision-seeking which was calculated to unbalance any Wesley. She had poured a certain amount of cold water on ecstasies, and had insisted on the solidity and the poise of the ordered means of grace. In so far she had been loyal to Mother Church and to her husband, but she had nullified all Samuel Wesley's diatribes against Dissent by one significant piece of advice which she had given her son John. The shades of all the Annesleys died hard with Susanna Wesley, and to her credit it remains that ever the lay-preacher came up to the help of the Lord in the wilderness ways of eighteenth-century England. She had dealt with John over that matter as she would have handled him in childhood's days at Epworth. His face was dark and angry as he came posting in to

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the Foundery from an excursion to the west. He looked on mischief bent because Thomas Maxfield had dared to preach to the people, and who was Thomas Maxfield but a layman who had been the first-fruits of John's new open-air ministry in Bristol? Susanna could see in her son's face that it was going to be hard going for the said Thomas Maxfield. She was accustomed to read her children like open books, so she stood quietly in her son's way and asked him the question of all the mothers of the world: "What is the matter?" He answered her roughly: "Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find." It cannot have been the first time that her sweet reasonableness brought that son of hers back to his senses as she stood and looked at him. The whole fate of the Evangelical Revival hung on the issue of that encounter in that place where today the unheeding manufacture cigarettes. Quietly the words came, smoothing the anger from the face of the outraged priest of the Church: "John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favoring readily anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as ever you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching and hear him also yourself."

On those uncomfortable benches in the Foundery sat John Wesley, later, listening to his first lay-preacher and hearing again his mother's devastating reasoning: "As much called of God as you." And it was true. The man had power, such power as to hold

more than John Wesley spellbound. The Countess of Huntingdon was amazed that even she could listen to such a one as though she had been turned to stone in the immobility of her astonishment. Susanna Wesley had been right again, and her son bowed his head to his God and to his mother's sagacity, and answered from his heart, all passion spent: "It is the Lord! Let Him do what seemeth Him good!" All the spirits of Susanna's dissenting ancestors, safely buried just over the way in Bunhill Fields, must have shouted for joy. They all had known always that they were as much called of God as the veriest Archbishop of Canterbury for all his noble army of bishops, priests, and deacons. The victory was again with St. Paul and the Reformation, and Samuel Wesley with all his fine works and his preferment lay beaten and moldering in the grave. His wife had torpedoed his orthodox indignation at one stroke. It was almost her last good deed in his vale of tears.

Now John Wesley, like any Peer Gynt, was sitting on her bedside charioting her to heaven. As always, when most moved, he sang. He called it a requiem to her parting soul, and his sisters, gathered in that little room, joined in. It was to be the last time that Susanna's scholars would sing round her as in her Epworth school. They would always be children to her, but in reality they were a group of stricken women as they stood singing round the gasping Susanna. She had said: "As soon as I am released, children, sing a psalm of praise to God." That was just what life

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had come to mean for the wife of Samuel Wesley, "as soon as I am released." Now she lay looking upwards on her widow's bed with prayer on her lips and thoughts of ultimate release, as often she had lain in those far-off difficult days of child-bearing at Epworth. But it was not of the husband of her bosom she was dreaming. That little figure did not rustle up, complete in cassock, to welcome Susanna into the everlasting habitations. Rather she was thinking of the Man of Sorrows, and her last words were for Him only and spoken in a tone of glad surprise: "My dear Saviour! Are you come to help me in my extremity at last?"

John Wesley felt her pulse and knew the brave heart had at last done with the struggle. He looked at her hands, those hands of a mother always remembered, and saw them already dead. He sat and watched, and through his brain the old words of her great book came echoing: "From three to four the silver cord was loosing and the wheel breaking at the cistern." Behind him stood that group of sorrow—Emily, Sukey, Hetty, Anne, and Martha. Life had dealt hardly with the womenfolk of the Rector of Epworth. Hetty was there broken in body and with a mind now occupied in the poetry of the grave. She had written her own epitaph with its last fierce expostulation with life: "A broken heart can bleed no more." Emily was there who had summed up her father so aptly with his fine sanguine dreams and his hopeless performance. She was as stern and unrelenting as any old Puritan, and had put John Wes-

ley right time and again for all the love she bore him. She had even ventilated the little room in Aldersgate Street with a cold douche of realism: "For God's sake tell me how a distressed woman who expects daily to have the very bed taken from under her for rent can consider the state of the Churches in Germany." She also could look forward to nothing but a grave, and a pauper's grave at that, for after all her sufferings it had been her hard hap to marry "a tradesman without a trade." Here was Anne, too, the baby who had arrived when the bells were ringing for the accession of Queen Anne. It was forty years ago since the Rector had returned and made up his quarrels with the wife of his bosom and found the new olive branch and christened her Anne. Now she was almost an old woman herself and knew all life could do to a woman married to a drunken husband. Sukey had feared still worse in her choice of partner, and was married to "a man, he may be called, that is little inferior to the apostate angels in wickedness, that is not only her plague, but a constant affliction to the family." And there was Martha, so like John Wesley to look at, and born as he was in that cloister period of Susanna's life. She had that preternatural calm that life's little ironies could never ruffle. Her spouse adored was half mystic and half libertine. But like John Wesley she could pass through all unscathed and "breathe in tainted air." Westly Hall was enough to break anyone's heart, but Martha went calmly on her way and saw her whole family safely into the grave ere she laid down her bones in the fields close here to the

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Foundery where now she stood watching her mother's dying struggle. It must have been she, true to her name, who was making that dish of tea for poor worn-out John when the watchers summoned them back to the bedside for the final goodbye. Life had done its worst for Susanna Wesley, but she could still open her eyes wide in the astonishment of prayer at the very moment of dissolution. The love of God still held good in face of all the horror of life.

They buried her on Sunday, the 1st of August, 1742, in the Dissenters' graveyard across the lane which led to the City. On her plain tombstone she was allowed to be the daughter of that old Puritan, Dr. Samuel Annesley, but there was no word to say she was the relict of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, Rector of Epworth. It was not quite the thing to bury *his* wife in unconsecrated ground, but Charles Wesley did his best to make her respectable with his epitaph of the efficacious sacrament:

"The Father then revealed His Son,
Him in the broken bread made known."

It is safe to say that Charles Wesley dare not have written that glib poem had his mother been alive. With superb arrogance he made her mourn a legal night of seventy years in darkness before the light of his own particular brand of religion was vouchsafed to her. In the sacrament, administered by that philanthroper Hall, Susanna Wesley was supposed to have been converted: "She knew and felt her sins for-

SON TO SUSANNA

given." Of course it was outrageous, for he was not fit to hold a candle to Susanna, but it was very like Charles Wesley. He should have seen that every sin had long since been purged away in the fiery furnace of life with old Samuel Wesley. Not for Susanna was instant salvation, but rather a whole life of self-abnegation and crucifixion and a growing in grace. It is true that Charles was not there when his mother died and that after he had taken a leaf out of John's book he did much better with that sacramental hymn of his which begins:

"What are these arrayed in white,
Brighter than the noonday sun?
Foremost of the sons of light,
Nearest the eternal throne?
These are they that bore the cross,
Nobly for their Master stood;
Sufferers in His righteous cause,
Followers of the dying God."

But first his brother had conducted that last service for her in great anguish of spirit, when a hush fell on the crowd in Bunhill Fields as John Wesley read of the Great White Throne and that awful Judgment when the dead must answer for the deeds done in the body. Standing by that open grave in the rank grass, Son John surely knew that Susanna had passed the test with flying colors. Where he was standing, amidst that forest of tombstones of the Puritan saints, he could see the grave of the Pilgrim who had fled from

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the City of Destruction and had staked his soul on the sacrifice of that Man of Sorrows whom he had seen when he came, in his pilgrimage, to the place that was a little ascending. It is likely that John Bunyan and Susanna Wesley, in the last analysis, had no sacrament to trust in save the eternal Cross which is planted for ever in the very heart of humanity. But Charles Wesley had always heard the rustle of his own cassock, as his father had done before him, so he really could not help it, and it was left for a more clear-sighted posterity to remove his objectionable epitaph from Bunhill Fields. It was natural for him to think of himself and his precious views first. It was typical of the two that when they came back from Georgia Charles should race upstairs to see his mother and even as he ran should think how glad his mother would be to see him, and how the sight of him would do her good: "I went to comfort my mother indisposed in her chamber." But for John the meeting was enough: "I saw my mother once more." She had been everything to this son of hers, and now she was dead, and ever afterwards he would have no one to turn to for help and counsel in this rough world.

John Wesley was bereft indeed, for he had consulted her always. It was she who had to scrutinize the Varanese raptures over Thomas à Kempis and sift that lady's views on humility. It was she who had to give advice on the bringing up of children to the young mother at Stanton and her interested women friends, so that long afterwards the elegant Aspasia

could almost quote Susanna's very words to her sister when Anne Granville became a mother in her turn: "I don't fear your prudence in the management of your children. Love coupled with fear are the bands which must confine them to what is right. A wrong and over-indulgent conduct of parents to children is the greatest cruelty to them," or as Susanna had said, "They pass for kind and indulgent whom I call cruel parents." It was for Susanna that the whole sad tale of Miss Sophy had been so plainly written, and it was his mother who had concluded against a return to Georgia. When the next blow fell what should he do? Already on the books at the Foundery a name had been written down. It was there unnoticed and unobtrusive to the eye when Susanna lay above stairs in her last agony. It was as little as a man's hand, but it was destined to eclipse all other stars in the firmament, for the name was the name of Grace Murray.

XXII

NEWCASTLE

THE House of Stuart had a way of influencing the House of Wesley at unexpected moments. With its loyalties had been bound up that drama in Epworth Rectory before the birth of John Wesley. The friends of Wesley at Stanton had been followers of the Stuart, and the fall of that Royal House had sent the father of Aspasia into banishment in the delectable Cotswold country. It is also true that Grace Murray's husband had lost his estates in Scotland from his own father's loyalty to the Old Pretender. Now the Young Pretender was marching from Scotland at the head of his loyal men and all unwittingly upset the plans of the Rev. John Wesley, who was engaged in a preaching tour near Epworth.

England was longing for a leader. She had lavished her store of love on these Stuarts, who time and time again had played her false. It was all this combustible stuff of love and loyalty that John Wesley's campaign had tapped and liberated in the service of the King of kings. His brother's hymns were a glorious safety-valve for this pent-up longing for a leader, and through them all echoed so often the name of Captain. It was no wonder that the early Methodists were forever in the toils as suspect supporters of these tiresome Stuarts. The years after 1745 show

a great outbreak of mob violence against Wesley's followers and their leader himself was always being dubbed a Papist. The priests of the English Church who led the mobs against the Methodists were but taking up the cudgels against interference from abroad which would threaten both Church and State if unchecked. They were the true protestant patriots, and they would save true religion into the bargain if the Methodist with his enthusiasms was pitched into the nearest horse-pond. So it came about that the Church of old Samuel Wesley drubbed her truest sons ever towards that opposite and hated Camp of Dissent. Almost every church building was closed against them until John Wesley himself was shut out even from the old Epworth sanctuary, and so came to preach from his father's tombstone in the churchyard there. There is a certain fascination in that scene of John Wesley perched above that little irascible father of his, now held down and rendered speechless by reason of death and the covering gravestone. It must have been the first time that Son John had succeeded in getting the last word. Below his feet were Susanna's words of the Trinity in Unity and "the only Saviour of Men" which in her day had been a brave flourish against the Unitarianism of Dissent. Now here stood her son, driven from the true Church, and yet offering such a general salvation to men through that only Saviour that the old issues were sadly confused.

John Wesley's mind must have been busy with old memories as he rode hot haste for the north. He had a conviction that his king and country needed him,

NEWCASTLE

but he also had a nearer concern for his own property. In his great campaign for the salvation of England he had seized on three strategic positions, and there built his fortresses against the enemies of the Lord. The buildings were really centers of peace with just a hint of the bungalow in Arcadia and the garden at Stanton. The Foundry in Moorfields held London for Christ. The New Room in the Horse-fair at Bristol kept the loyalty of the west, and at Newcastle upon Tyne the Orphan House held the north. It surely is not for nothing that the great little Duke of Wellington sprang from the House of Wesley. The gardens soon became graveyards, but they were always dear to John Wesley. He could pause in the heat of his great campaign to give directions for the re-hanging of a garden gate. In addition each house was set up with a cobbled yard and a stable for the horses of the traveling preachers. There was a good living-room complete with table and benches, and the private rooms opened off this large common-room and gave hostelry for his rough riders in the interests of the Kingdom of Heaven. The lavish supply of cupboards always speaks of Susanna Wesley, for she had reigned over his first fortress in London at the Foundry.

Now at Newcastle reigned Grace Murray. There she nursed the preachers' bodies and broke their hearts. There she looked after the women of the camp and drove them mad with jealousy. They complained that she spent too much on her aprons, which was a sure sign that she looked better than any of them in

whatever she put on. To John Wesley she was like a mother. She would advise and warn and encourage him in the great campaign. She would do a good deal of his own work in settling the women's bands and class meetings, and to crown all she was a superb housekeeper. She gathered up in herself all the qualities he had always loved in women. She had the ever sought-after neatness of person and the vigor for work which even that lady of leisure Aspasia had evinced when she set a dainty stitch between each elegant sip of tea. But whereas Aspasia was far removed from her impoverished admirer, Grace Murray was entirely at his service. She knew how to supply every one of those wants of toilet and home comfort that a mother's heart knows so well by instinct. She could also listen to his sermons and think along with him and know what he was going to say even before it was said. She was the perfect comrade. She would lay down her life for John Wesley. In the riots she would stand by him and quickly see the raised stone or the hated filth which was coming from the angry crowd against her hero. He had always loathed getting his clothes dirty since those infant days when Susanna had presided over his regular change of linen. Bravely the woman would defend him if need be with her own body. Fearlessly would Grace Murray ride on his poor stumbling horses anyhow and anywhere in the interests of the Kingdom of God which now belonged so peculiarly both to him and to her. For she was among the initiate, made one in the glorious fellowship of salvation. She took the

road of life with a clear eye and a ready hand in the most glorious band of pilgrims who ever traversed the moors and fells of England.

That early dawn of Methodism was just as though heaven had come down to earth. The first ten years of the revival were the golden age, when the whole thing was growing under Wesley's hand and the people were singing those glorious hymns with tears of joy. It was a time of deliverance for the captive who before had lived his life subject to bondage in that awful election fear of Calvin and the flames of Hell. It was a time of love in an age of barren reason—a love that simply would not be reasoned with, as all true love must ever be. It was a glorious time of work with fields white unto harvest. The souls who pressed on John Wesley were fevered and overladen. They came to him as the physician, and found health in contact with that upright little person with his beautiful hands and that light in his eye. When he preached to them he had a way of stroking back his curls and looking round on them all with so searching a look that time and time again he set their hearts beating like a sledge-hammer in their breasts. He was so sure of it all, and so very sure of his Master, and he was braced with such energy and confidence that they gave him their willing allegiance.

The little man had thrown his halting reasoning overboard, and there were no more resolutions or ejaculatory prayers in the diaries in his saddle-bags as he sallied forth to contest the kingdoms of this world for Christ. And with him went Grace Murray in a

glorious friendship in which there were no inhibitions. The early Methodists were free with the freedom with which Christ set them free. Gone were the heartache and the hesitations of the earlier Mays and Aprils of John Wesley's life. Now in the golden September of 1745 he rode into Newcastle and received a welcome which he records in his *Journal* with satisfaction: "We came to Newcastle at an acceptable time." He had arrived at the age of man's chief vigor. He knew himself to be raising the whole country as Bonny Prince Charlie could never raise it, and everywhere he went people followed him with looks of love and veneration which made him just a little uneasy as not due to him or to any save to God alone. It is impossible to overestimate the hero worship which attended John Wesley in those glorious days. He had stolen the fire of all the knock-kneed Stuarts, and Grace Murray worshiped with the rest.

In Ireland Aspasia had "new arranged" her shells and then set her mosses in order and later played on the harpsichord because she was so disappointed she could not go to England by reason of these horrid rebels from Scotland. She also had altered her mind about the noble House of Stuart. The promotion of her husband to the Deanery of Down had been at other hands, and life was too comfortable to ransack old loyalties. She was leading an amiable existence with an admiring husband who praised all her hobbies and helped to advance her friends in the Church, and it is clear she would have done the same for the Wesleys had they not been so utterly foolish as to get so

horribly enthusiastic and to compass sea and land to make proselytes. She was still collecting sermons, and had just read one on these same Stuart rebels which she pronounced "charming." Now the lady was somewhat detached from reality, if not from reason, if she could so describe as charming those rabble hordes from Scotland. Nor was the English army of press gang men of distinct charm which was to rout the hosts of Bonny Prince Charlie. There was really little charm about that place of slaughter when the stars looked down on Scottish faces "dead on Culloden's field."

Meanwhile her old friend John Wesley, with a greater sense of reality, was dashing out to see if the guns on Newcastle wall missed his orphan house. He had a sort of infectiously gay courage, and was longing to get into the camp to preach to the soldiers of the Captain of their Salvation.

No more languishing in the moonlit quads of Oxford for Aspasia's quondam admirer—this was life, full-blooded and magnificent. And Grace Murray was a kindred spirit in her superhuman labors in his orphan house. She had nursed his sick preachers back to life like any Florence Nightingale. She had stayed up for three weeks at a stretch to get his helpers on the road again—she had fainted and gone on as usual, although he begged her not to "for one night more." In addition she had run the house for all his able-bodied veterans and had settled the bands and prayed with the sisters and had worked like a Trojan for God and Wesley. She was so busy she never noticed the

sisters' gossip or their black looks, but she would have things done and all in order for the great campaign, and if all women should hate her she really did not care.

Varanese was busy advancing her children and her husband, who was constantly in debt, by the kind offices of Aspasia. Miss Sophy was well married, and in truth had been little better than a flirt. In Grace Murray John Wesley had met some compounding of English soil which he had never met before in his women friends. An intense emotional nature was subdued by the background of the north-country discipline of proud poverty. She was a woman who was not afraid of work. Her love and her loyalty were queer elemental things and not the elegant and talked-of darlings of Court drawing-room or arbor. Stalking behind her ever was the grim reality of life—the right and the wrong and the inescapable judgment. In her strong body there was still a place for fear, but it was not of the physical kind at all, rather a hidden primeval fear of the Gods of the Forests with their totems and their taboos. She had an almost morbid terror of doing the wrong thing—a haunting fear that forever and forever such wrong action would go on until all those she loved best were brought down in ruin by her hand. Wedded to the primitive fears were primitive loves so powerful as to rend the veil of the Temple of Clay. She shared with John Nelson that power of knowing when the Wesleys were near from a strange psychic disturbance within.

Such was Grace Murray and such the early Methodists who flocked to Wesley's standard and found salvation. The quality of the religion which he offered them was this emotional, disciplined thing which they could understand. It was all a matter of passionate love and loyalty, and was the only thing which could really rout that old primeval fear from their hearts. Hundreds of them came to Wesley for help, and he read the symptoms of their distress as Uncle Matthew might have done, but the cure he knew lay only with God "who made them for Himself and would not suffer them to rest till they rested in Him."

The Reformation might have made the world safe for democracy, but it had rendered the ultimate estate of man more precarious. It had called in question the efficacy of an ordered priesthood to pilot the individual soul to heaven and had taken up the position of Emily Wesley's indignant protest: "Nor shall I put my conscience under the direction of mortal man as frail as myself." But the shock to the collective mind of this devastating upheaval of viewpoint has never been fully explored. The fall of the Medieval Church left embedded in the mind of man a mass trauma. In a once safe world all had now become conjectural. Who should now select the candidates for entrance to the everlasting habitations? Who should now know if his sins were forgiven him or no? To camouflage that breach, made by the discrediting of the priest, the presbyter hastened to put the responsibility on God alone:

SON TO SUSANNA

“O Thou, who in the heavens dost dwell,
Who, as it pleaseth best Thyself,
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
A’ for Thy glory,
And no for onie guid or ill
They’ve done afore Thee!”

The crowds which flocked to hear Wesley were weary and heavy-laden with seeking some sane way through the inexorable labyrinth of the Mind of God. A jaded, beaten humanity went out after a man so sure and so strong in every inch of his virile person. He took away that terrible feeling of inferiority, for he lifted the responsibility from the shoulders of God and gave it back fearlessly to the human heart. With a glad sense of surprise and thanksgiving Englishmen received back again the gift of their own free will. He told them plainly that now, in this acceptable hour, they were free to choose whether they would have life or death. They needed no priest nor cast-iron election, but only the freewill offering of a loving heart. So came the Methodist doctrine of assurance from the conviction that those sins that were many were all forgiven in a mutual covenant of love. It was a gospel to bind the pilgrim so fast to his Guide that he could never be swept to perdition unless he himself cut the rope. The ghosts of Presbyter and Old Priest grew wan and presently faded away amid the tears, the laughter and the song of a Wesley field-day:

NEWCASTLE

“O how shall I the goodness tell,
 Father, that Thou to me hast showed?
That I, a child of wrath and hell,
 I should be called a child of God,
Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,
Blest with this antepast of heaven!”

XXIII

ALEXANDER MURRAY

AT the time of John Wesley's joyous friendship with Miss Sophy, this woman, Grace Murray, had been already married. If ever there was a love match hers was one. Her husband, Alexander Murray, was a fine, upstanding ship's captain when he took Grace to be his lawful wedded wife. He was troubled with no inhibitions nor hampered by ejaculatory prayer in his love-making. It was a swift, passionate mating. In four days he was at sea again, but the young couple had lived every moment of that brief union, and when Alexander sailed away he left a woman utterly his own. Grace Murray could think of nothing but her husband. Before her eyes she saw his dear face and in her ears sounded all the wonderful words he had said to her. She believed she must die for love and desire of him. This cruel separation seemed to devastate both her body and mind and became so fierce an obsession with her that she grieved over his absence both by night and by day. The little babe who should have been hers was swept away all prematurely, in this flood of inordinate grief, but left Grace unhampered to rush to London to meet her husband when his ship came again to port. There followed four months of bliss, with deeper satisfaction and less agony than in that whirling four days

of honeymoon. Life was now full and complete. It was all Alexander Murray and there was no room or need for God.

Grace was left with child again, but her husband was home from the stormy seas ere she embarked on her own perilous adventure of childbirth. In her pain that old fear took shape again. What if she should die? It was a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and yet with that great ship's captain beside her it was not too difficult to believe in a God who could save as well as damn. It was perhaps only half a thought among those birth pangs, yet she believed it a kind of trust in God. She was no sooner on her feet than her husband had her heart again and "banish'd all other thoughts." The next year took her to Portsmouth for the bliss of reunion and its packed pleasures. She felt a little sobered again when she saw her landlady go so regularly to Church and a little fearful that, after all, her sins might find her out, but when she wanted to listen to a strange man preaching on Kennington Common her husband hurried her away. Why listen to that crazy Whitefield when there remained but a month of leave and a desolation of loneliness afterwards that would stretch all round the globe and back again before the husband of her love came home? He went, and her heart was broken, but this time she had the child of his love to cheer her days. And then a terrible thing happened. The child born of that passionate love died, just as though it had been

scorched in some flame prepared for it from the foundation of the world.

They laid the little scrap of humanity on the table, and Grace stood and looked at her handiwork and the vengeance of God. Of course she had forgotten the God of terrors, for she had been so safe in her husband's strong arms. Now she was doubly alone, and the fear of death rose on her even as she gazed on that still baby face, and she was overwhelmed. Somehow, for her sin that flower had been blasted. For her hot bliss her child's soul was forfeit. Down into hell it must go, tortured and twisting in agony, and for a mother's heart that was damnation. Of course she had not cared about God, but He was real, after all, and had taken one step out from that tangled unintelligible background of His forest home to strike Alexander's child out of her arms. She had always known something would go wrong if she did the wrong thing, and it could not be right to live as she had lived when her husband came home from sea, for "the Lord thy God is a jealous God."

There was no end to this misery, and to a woman like Grace Murray there was no hope at all. She paced that bedroom of burning memories in despair. Tears were her portion night and day, and grief filled the room up of her absent child. She would steal out to the churchyard and read through her tears those hopeless, glib epitaphs, and then turn to her baby's grave and weep again in abject sorrow. It was not only just the death of the child, it was that awful

load on her conscience, that terrible thought that the sin of the world lay at her own door.

Her sister could do nothing with her, but tried to distract her thoughts by taking her to a dance, which at one time was a form of entertainment in which she delighted. The experiment was not a success, for the wretched woman's knees smote so together that there was no dance step possible, and she felt she loathed the whole petty round of pleasure. A woman's soul in agony had no use for the light fantastic toe. Another friend had a bright idea, and told Grace of the preaching in Moorfields and commended this as a distraction. Grace lay awake all night, and at four o'clock stumbled out into the September morning to find her way as best she could to Moorfields. She joined a woman who was going there, and together they were lost in the stream of people hastening to the preaching. Some sitting, some standing, some in little knots of fellowship, the people waited for the bread of life. Many had felt no need for the meat that perisheth, many had not slept for nights, many had specters of the mind which mocked the brightness of the morning and the sure sanity of the daily round. Some, like John Nelson, had traveled all over England seeking peace and finding none, and were standing now longing for some job or some leadership which should spell salvation to their souls.

The crowds of eighteenth-century England seemed to suffer from a species of our "Twentieth-century Blues," but without the distraction of swift motor traffic to give them at least the illusion that they were

traveling somewhere. John Wesley had to deal, as the physician, with morbid souls, with terrified hearts scared out of all their wits by the Puritan legacy of hell fire, with people really driven desperate from sins committed and unpardonable, and also with the hopeless sufferers from sheer boredom; "troubled with what they call lowness of spirits. They wanted something they knew not what; and were therefore heavy, uneasy and dissatisfied with everything."

Grace Murray's case was more desperate than these, for the thing was all over with her, and well she knew there could be no second chance. The baby was dead and she was damned, and that was that. And yet, in that early morning near the graves of the old Dissenters she heard a beautiful voice speaking wonderful words: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." A little man had spoken it, standing there like a messenger of the Gods. Alert, confident, challenging, he looked round on the great crowd and held all eyes. Hearts beat like sledge-hammers, and through Grace darted pains such as she had only known before as pains of birth. She cried aloud: "Alas! What shall I do? How shall I be born again?" In her mind, obsessed with thoughts of birth and death, the words turned and twisted until down on the ground she sank in one tempest of weeping.

Swift as lightning came the challenge: "Has anyone here a desire to be saved?" And Grace answered in her heart that it was salvation for which she was dying. But where could she find it? To whom

should she go? And again a hand of help was held out by that confident, glorious little man who was preaching. He seemed to invite all trembling souls into a great partnership in his own strength and confidence: "My soul for yours if only you continue lying at the feet of Jesus." Grace sobbed on in a tremendous outpouring of hope and fear and desire, and soon a woman in the crowd stepped close to her. What ailed her? Grace could not tell, whether life or death, but the Methodist knew those symptoms well and whispered low in her ear: "The hammer of God's love is breaking your heart."

Love then was the secret. Grace was a connoisseur in love, but she had never dared to apply her knowledge to the God of Wrath and Judgment. Now the Almighty had slipped off His throne and had deigned to meet her on her own level of understanding. Here were nail-pierced hands held out to take all the hideous sin of the world into their own safekeeping. Grace was free to make a new start in love, and she knew such a God would never deal unmercifully with her little lost baby either. This, then, was salvation, and when the Methodists sang with that queer light in their eyes and the quiet tears of joy running down their cheeks she knew what it all meant:

"Father, Thine everlasting grace
 Our scanty thought surpasses far;
 Thy heart still melts with tenderness,
 Thy arms of love still open are
 Returning sinners to receive,
 That mercy they may taste and live."

It was just the language that a woman like Grace Murray could understand. Those singing crowds somehow picked up a tone of Georgian forest and arcadian bungalow, a sweet tenderness of earthly loss and yet heavenly gain, and withal they sang of a God out of the primeval forest with a burning heart of love.

That morning John Wesley stepped into Grace Murray's life and laid the fate of his great Revival at her feet. A cabin boy had saved it before, but now it was beset by more potent danger. How was a woman's heart to cope with such responsibility?

Alexander Murray returned from the seas to learn that his beautiful wife had joined the Methodists. He smiled, for well he knew his Grace. A great ship's captain of a man, he had handled worse things than that in his time. Only let darkness fall and she would be his again as she had always been. But the powers of darkness this time had gambled too confidently on poor weak human nature. Alexander Murray was about to meet a rival who left him standing, for he had no sort of a chance against the Love of God. He could ride out storms at sea and navigate gusts of passion, but the winds of God were beyond his manipulation. So he stormed and threatened and said he would put her in a madhouse unless she left these pestilential Methodists, and there she calmly stood and faced it out although he had said: "If you are resolved to go on thus I will leave you: I will go as far as ships can sail." Surely the memory of his former absence on salt estranging sea would

be too much for a mere Methodist, but he could hardly believe his ears when she answered him: "I cannot help it. I could lay down my life for you, but I cannot destroy my soul. If you are resolved to go, you must go; I give you up to God."

There was nothing now left for Alexander Murray but to make shift to share his beautiful wife with this rival—God. The report went that he had come by a conversion, but well he knew the bitterness of his own heart. It was certainly true that his life was changed, but also it was still more evident that there had passed away a glory from this earth. The bosom of converting Grace was not quite all that the ship's captain could have desired. He loved her still fiercely all the time that he knew she was ruined. He loved her so that he would not keep her on his boat at Deptford because she did not like the sailors swearing, and it had come to that between them, for in the old days, if she could only be in his arms, she had cared about nothing else. Now all was changed. When they said goodbye he wept over her and could not part, following her and then turning back towards his boat. But it was more than the parting with Grace that broke him down. His were surely tears on the grave of a beautiful dream which had vanished forever. Alexander Murray was lost overboard on his very next voyage, for why should he return?

It was only in dreams now that her husband troubled Grace Murray. She was in the May morn of the life of Christ and walked on air. She was the finest recruit that the Methodists had had for a long

time, and was working for them night and day. That night when her husband was drowned she had a strange dream. A great weight was on her feet which might have been the cat, and she tried to thrust it away, but to her horror it unrolled itself until it lay by her side the whole length of a man. Now she felt no fear, but an awe, because she dreamed she was praying all the time and knew herself "in ye hands of God." Which was a parable and bespoke the doom of Alexander Murray almost as a wish fulfilment, for there really was no room for him since the Methodists had sung of those other Arms of love: "When I waked I was convinced my husband was dead. But I was so filled with God that at this time nothing could disturb or interrupt my happiness in Him." Significantly she adds the glad realization of the nearness of God: "I felt ye everlasting Arms were round me."

XXIV

WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD

It had been a strenuous campaign. The good news of salvation had been carried far and wide. The traveling preachers had been beaten, stoned, half drowned and put in prison. It had been all so excitingly Scriptural, and Primitive Christianity had come back to earth again. The early Methodists took no thought how they should answer their persecutors, but it was given them in that hour what they should speak. They literally bore branded in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. John Nelson had almost perished outside the city wall at York and had ridden to warn Wesley of his danger with a shirt stained the color of raw beef. Charles Wesley had had his own share of honorable wounds, and it had made more of a poet of him than ever. The spice of excitement in hurtling brickbats and dead rats had made him chant the very Marseillaise of the Revival:

“Thy glory was our rear ward,
Thy hand our lives did cover,
And we, even we, have passed the sea,
And marched triumphant over.”

It was no wonder that, singing such words to

popular tunes, the Methodists were in constant danger of being dubbed the followers of the young Pretender, who would most certainly have passed the sea and marched triumphantly through the country if only he had been able. Had not the promise been, when he had fled over the sea to Skye, that "Charlie would come again"? The sea had a fascination for the Methodist poet, and the brave people who had to bear the riots and the brickbats became the Ship's Company and breasted the wave, fluting a wild carol ere their death. Grace Murray loved those sea hymns the best of all, and was to carry their refrain in her heart to the very end of her life.

Charles Wesley was also particularly happy with his songs and his work among condemned criminals. In those days of mighty crowds and public executions the sight must have been well-nigh insupportable to see a man go singing to his death. But the miracle happened over and over again, with the Methodists close at hand or mounted on the very cart of death. The ladies of easy virtue in the *Beggar's Opera* might lament that they already beheld the gay Macheath properly in the cart, but what of real highwaymen who went to their doom as though all heaven were opened before their eyes? The scaffold at Tyburn was just the very place where Charles Wesley's bustling mercurial disposition was an asset. His heart rose on the tiptoe of excitement and the eye of the poet saw it all in a flash. In that place of the gallows and the dangling rope he thought instinctively of those gibbets of the condemned malefactors outside

WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD

the wall at Jerusalem. He could introduce his poor victims, here struggling in their chains, to a fellowship of suffering and a hope of salvation sealed by the Son of God Himself. Across the centuries Tyburn and Calvary were fast linked in the love of God. The crowds looked up to see what should befall. They saw stark gibbet and swaying, dangling rope. They saw men about to die. But on their ears the strangest music broke, swaying over their heads and rising even to the very gates of heaven:

“Lamb of God, whose bleeding love
We still recall to mind,
Send the answer from above,
And let us mercy find.

Think on us, who think on Thee,
And every struggling soul release.
O remember Calvary,
And let us go in peace.”

Around the Marble Arch today men tub-thump and let loose upon the people a swarm of bees in bonnets. Today they offer quack remedies for imaginary ills in that place where once Charles Wesley, at the old Tyburn, offered salvation to men on the brink of eternity. He had passed whole days and nights in the condemned cell at Newgate, and had wrestled there for the souls of these men. Now in the hour of death there was no fear, but only hearts melted down with the surpassing love of God. It

SON TO SUSANNA

had been Christ's way on Calvary when He had promised life to the penitent thief, and now again to felons on Tyburn gallows Paradise was open to their eyes. That the peace in their hearts was real was shown in their faces after death. It is reported of one of them that "his face was not at all bloated or disfigured, no nor even changed from its natural color; but he lay with a calm, smiling countenance as one in a sweet sleep." The love of God had wiped away all marks of death by violence:

"O remember Calvary,
And let us go in peace."

The innate poetry in the heart of an English crowd and even in an execution crowd was seen by the fact that such a corpse was deemed sacred. It was not fitting that such an one should be carted off to the surgeons for their profane knives and dissections, and a gang of sailors saw that quite plainly. They were men living in the awful conditions of life on board ships like the *Bounty* in mutiny, but they had seamen's eyes, and they had watched Charles Wesley there under the gallows and felt something stirring from that strange spiritual Ship's Company even to their own. They fought the friends of science for the possession of the body and stood victors on a stricken field. Then the British Navy composed its features and its oaths, and reverently, to the stricken mother, delivered the body of her son.

England had certainly never before seen religion

after this fashion. To be of the Ship's Company itself was life to the full, pressed down and running over. Here was a fellowship against which the gates of hell could not prevail. All over the country these friends came through riots, side by side, and became accustomed to look death in the face. Once in 1748, at Roughlea in Lancashire, the little band of the leaders themselves came near to losing their lives. John Wesley and William Grimshaw of Haworth, with Grace Murray and a certain John Bennet, were cantering through the valley when the rabble broke upon them, led by the curate from Colne. Down from the hills poured the shouting hordes upon that little handful of horsemen. Wesley, Grimshaw and Bennet were beaten to the ground and smothered with filth. The Methodists who had gathered for the service were routed, and one poor disciple was chased remorselessly until he jumped into the river from an overhanging rock. Once there his plight was even more pitiable as each time he put his nose above water he was threatened with death. Drums beat and horns sounded while sticks were brandished and used to some purpose on the heads of the devoted Methodists.

History was indulging in one of her sly freaks of fortune, for here was Wesley, amid the ram's horns of the Establishment, for no other crime than that he was accused of apostasy from Mother Church. That the son of old Sam Wesley of Epworth should be in such a predicament was grotesque, and of course he stoutly denied it, but it looked again very much

as though the plain issue of that old contest of Church and Dissent was becoming confused in these peculiar Methodists. Now the little band was hours in conflict before they could make their escape at a swift trot out of the valley. Would John Wesley promise never to come there again? Would he promise to send none of his preachers there? To all of which the little man replied: "I would rather cut off my right hand than make such a promise." Grimshaw and Bennet must have watched him proudly, their hearts thumping in their breasts, and the priest of Haworth himself "ready to go to prison or death for Christ's sake." It was just the scene to put iron into Bennet, for he could manage anything in this glorious company. It was only when he was alone that he felt a little scared and not quite cut out for the martyr's crown: "I found myself weak and feeble and ready to wish myself away. I was jealous over my heart lest it should betray me. Therefore I desired the Lord to keep me from setting my hand to ye paper and from betraying the cause of Christ." Such was that band of brothers, and nearly all in turn came to Grace Murray to be nursed. The rigors of the campaign would bear on the strongest, and she was always ready to soothe the headache and to sit by the bedside and to comfort them in their sickness with her own strength and the comfort wherewith she was comforted of God.

It was in August, 1748, that Wesley himself was taken ill at the Orphan House in Newcastle. It must have been like nursing a flash of lightning, as he

would first sit up to ease his headache and then lie down and be promptly sick, so that he could not really decide whether it was better to sit up or to lie down. In any case he had to preach at five in the morning, however ill he was, so that did not leave much margin for elaborate nursing. The little man was too valuable to them all to leave things to chance, so Grace Murray sat up with him to get in all the hours possible to heal that fevered body. In the stillness of the sickroom at Newcastle he lay and watched her. Did she remind him of his mother? What thoughts were passing through his mind? His brother Charles was thinking of getting married after a consultation with his brother and the submitting of three names as possible candidates. What of Varanese, Aspasia, Miss Sophy? John Wesley had crossed them all off his list long ago. He had no need any longer for such charmers and yet he was very low just now and his mother was dead, and it was good to feel Grace's cool hands on his burning forehead. She was so quiet and so neat and knew all he wanted without his having to speak a word. She was so brave and so true—he could feel his life safe in her hands. Now turning towards her, in that darkened room, and watching her quiet, orderly ways, he felt all at once that sudden sense of well-being, that swift realization of returning health. Then, "sliding into it" he knew not how, he spoke to her half shyly and half gaily in that voice which could be so compelling, and these were the words he said: "If ever I marry I think you will be the person."

XXV

GRACE

JOHN WESLEY was preaching better than he had ever preached in his life before. The crowds who came to hear him would stand motionless, and at the close none offered to go away. The simple field preaching was assuming a dignity and a reverence not known in St. Paul's Cathedral, where men often talked and laughed during the service. The people of England were hanging on the words of the field preacher, and a new reverence for his own little person was forming itself intangibly through England. The people of Newcastle had only rough arguments for the royal Stuart, but for John Wesley they "pulled off their hats" as he marched gaily through their streets. There had been a hint of such a spring-time in Georgia when those hymns had sounded side by side with Miss Sophy. Things were vastly different now. The very hymns were different after that heart-warming in Aldersgate Street, but there was still that intangible something of the Divine and the human love transfused, muted, blended. When a woman like Grace Murray heard the Methodists sing, before her conversion and ere she knew their language, those songs alone were able to set all her passions roving. There was terribly combustible matter in the Methodist revival of religion. All

would be well if it could be held reasonable and harnessed in the strong hand of the son of Susanna Wesley, but it was ten years since Aldersgate Street, and Grace Murray was taking up more and more room in the emotional life of John Wesley. He was a man of forty-five years and had flamed over England with that virile manhood of his for ten years, and now his eyes seemed to have opened and he had seen a woman, by the light of a bedroom candle, bending over him like his mother. Anything might happen with the passion wherewith Grace herself was capable of loving, and what a chorus of hymn singing that would make! Grace had that peculiarly beautiful low voice that tunes men's hearts in their breasts. Her compass in singing was another miracle. The scene had become idyllic. There were summer evenings of compelling beauty. Gone were the nervous notes of those old fatal Aprils and Mays, but here was something full-blooded and tremendous, and the people held their breath while Wesley preached in the summer of '48: "It was a delightful evening and a delightful place under the shade of tall trees. And every man hung upon the word; none stirred his head or hand or looked to the right or left, while I declared in strong terms, 'the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

To Newcastle and to that other Grace John Wesley returned, and there, in his own house which he delighted in, he told her more about himself and his friendship and his dreams for the future. They stood at night in that little old-fashioned room with the paved courtyard outside and the window you could

look through as you sat at the table and see the preachers hailing you from the gate as they rode in weary but rejoicing. And Grace trembled. She knew so much more about love than John Wesley did, and she must not think like that. She knew she loved Wesley more than she had loved anyone ever before. Did she not owe him her very soul? But Wesley as the pilot of the ship's company was one thing, Wesley with the shadow of the old sea captain over his shoulder was another thing altogether. It was not for nothing that Alexander Murray had complained that Mr. Wesley had robbed him of all his earthly happiness! It was literally true, for his wife's love had been lost in the love of the Christ of Wesley's preaching, and at the feet of the preacher had been laid an emotion of reverence, love and rapture which even made Wesley himself tremble. And now when he spoke with her at Newcastle she broke down altogether and sobbed: "This is too great a blessing for me—I can't tell how to believe it. This is all I could have wished for under Heaven if I had dared to wish for it." It had all come about so quickly and she had been taken off her guard, but here was the truth, and from that moment Wesley conversed with her as his own.

It was not quite like an ordinary courtship as the lover was John Wesley, but it was exciting enough. A great part of their time alone together was spent in prayer, and the needs of the campaign were so exacting that there remained little leisure for earthly bliss. John Wesley had told his preachers that it was

inconceivable that they should preach one less sermon or ride one less mile because they were engaged or married, and he was true to his own exhortations. There was no primrose path at Newcastle for the leader, for he had to be about the King's business, and so the time soon came to say goodbye and take horse in that little cobbled courtyard. But the night before he left, Grace broke down again and begged they might not part so soon, for it was more than she could bear. The little man was not really used to such response from his old-time friends, but he had said: "I am convinced God has called you to be my fellow laborer in the Gospel—now we must part for a time, but if we meet again I trust we shall part no more," and it had broken her all in pieces. He did not really know the ground he stood on or the danger of speaking thus to a woman like Grace Murray, and she herself knew she must not really believe it for it must be all a dream.

Yet the flesh was weak. The little man thought of a good plan on the spur of the moment—why should they part just then? Grace should go with him through Yorkshire and Derbyshire on his way to London, and then John Bennet could see her back safely from Chinley when they must finally say goodbye. This was a grand pilgrimage, and Grace was unspeakably useful with the women's bands and in all the societies. They stayed at Haworth with William Grimshaw, for he always kept open house for the Methodist preachers there in the old parsonage with its pleasant garden and its roomy courtyard.

The old wooden settle is still there built in near the great stone mantelpiece, although that strange company who met there and sat and sang their strange hymns are long since dust. But the old house still holds its secret, and there in the porchway is the iron ring sunk deep in old masonry where John Wesley and Grace Murray tied up their horses. It is the same nail-studded door that shut in the old ship's company in glorious fellowship at the end of the journey. So through the August days they rode together and on into the long evenings and the long shadows, and at last they clattered down into the valley where Chinley stands and the green hills shut it in: "I left her in Cheshire with John Bennet and went on my way rejoicing."

John Wesley was happy. God had been wonderfully good to him and had solved his problems in a remarkable manner. In the old days the storms of love had separated him from God. He had had to devise his ejaculatory prayer, his fastings and his resolutions to keep pace with it at all. They had been his climber's rope to prevent him from being swept from God's side by the avalanche. Now the loveliest thing of all was that when he thought of Grace he instinctively thought of God, and in no antagonistic way, but as though she led him so graciously into the very Presence. He was deliciously safe in such a friendship. Grace also was as good as Miss Sophy on pilgrimage. She was as nicely modest and as uncomplaining as had Miss Sophy been in those Georgian camps of old. But what a different woman was she

from the wax doll of Savannah! She understood him as well as his mother. But here was something a mother could never give in that heart of a woman for her mate and that sweet note of reverence which transformed all into a perfect idyll. Of course he could not think of marriage just then, but there was no hurry. She was safe as his housekeeper at Newcastle, and he would take her to Ireland with him in the spring if the road seemed long. Then he must consult all his preachers and his brother Charles, but, mercifully, they had already convinced him at the London Conference that it was no sin to marry and that the bed was undefiled.

He had really never meant to get married, he told himself. Ever since he was seven years old he had made people laugh by saying he would never marry: "Because I should never find such a woman as my father had." Also that blow with Varanese in the day of the cuckoo's song had been well-nigh mortal. It had set up such a fear as to inhibit him from ever bringing off a real storming assault on any lady of his dreams ever again. Even with Grace Murray he could only talk by hints and suggestions of marriage, "sliding into it I knew not how." But that teasing ultimate fatal decision could be shelved conveniently with anyone so glorious as Grace, for he liked to think of her quite safely as "the daughter of my faith and prayer." He went on his way rejoicing, but he was as blissfully ignorant as ever of a woman's heart. He was really too much of a mother's son ever to understand it. He was also so sure of God that he could

see no rocks ahead, for now he lived at peace and took thought for one day at a time "safe in the hollow of Thy hand."

John Bennet would have given much for but half the assurance of his chief. When night fell that little house at Chinley might look very peaceful without, but within hearts were failing men for fear. Human heads were turning on restless pillows and truckle-beds were creaking under loads of anxious thought. The Methodists had set their leader on his way to London with pious good wishes, but John Bennet had noted his unusually high spirits. He had also noticed a new turn of tenderness in his farewell to Grace Murray. It all came back to his mind as he lay awake with Grace so near him here in his own house where he was host. At last he fell into a troubled sleep, and the unmentionable fear rushed up to consciousness. Fear clothed itself in marionette costume out of the mind's wardrobe, and there in poor John Bennet's brain was enacted a vivid little play. He saw John Wesley bending over Grace Murray, and he heard him speak to her so tenderly. He must be asking her to marry him. Bennet saw with relief that she pushed her lover away, but oh! so gently. He remained doubtful of what the upshot should be, and feared greatly that scene the curtain would ring up next on the mind's stage. Of course he awoke in fear and trembling, and with that haunting, waking consciousness of too vivid a dream, too lately experienced.

That dream haunted Bennet all next day. Fear

had him by the throat. He also had been ill at Newcastle, and there Grace Murray had nursed him through twenty-six blissful weeks, and she really had saved his life. When the rest of the company had despaired for him Grace had been calm and strong and had prayed her unchanging God to give him help out of the sanctuary. He had recovered in that very hour and had moreover risen from his bed to tell his wonderful nurse that God had given her to him as a wife in that prayer. Had Grace forgotten all about it? What was Wesley doing dancing night and day before Bennet's eyes? He must have it out with Grace or go raving mad, for he could find no peace this way either day or night.

The time had come for Grace to return to Newcastle under John Bennet's escort, and so over the hills they went together, and as they rode they talked "touching some things that had long lain on my mind." They spoke freely together, and the fear took shape and clothed itself with words: "Is there anything between you and Mr. Wesley?" And Grace Murray answered "No."

Never was a woman so cruelly placed. She was terrified of betraying Wesley to any one of his followers. She had no one she could consult as to her future course of action. She really did not believe that Wesley was in right down earnest, for he always had a way with him, and she could almost believe that Newcastle and her tears were all a dream. She had been fond of Bennet, but of course he could not hold a candle to Wesley, but equally of course a bird in

the hand was worth two in the bush. She now labored under a racking anxiety, and with her face turned to Autumn and an empty home at Newcastle she felt the onslaught of a contest which was to last all the winter. She received letters from both men, and her heart misgave her equally with both, nor could she find pleasure in either. She was no fool and had always had a horror of doing the wrong thing. She knew herself so dangerously placed that if she took but one false step the whole of the beloved Ship's Company might go to the bottom at a stroke. She had not nursed Bennet as a sick man for twenty-six weeks without having formed a fair estimate of his character. He had all the possibilities and all the attractiveness of a man endowed with the artistic temperament. He was painfully conscious of himself and painfully conscious of his own deeds. The diaries of the two men read so differently. John Wesley's takes an even pace with God, while Bennet's is nervous and fretful and introspective. He knows when the women come out to follow him with their eyes as he rides away on his travels. He appreciates the little things that people do for him as though they thought much of him. He is thrilled when people murmur in the crowd "there goes the preacher" and when at night some admirer serenades him below his window in the streets of Bolton. He was ambitious and restless, with a good brain and an eye for possibilities. He it was who enjoyed to the full those quarterly meetings on Todmorden Edge and showed the way to a democratic control of the Society which

GRACE

was to stand when the hand of Wesley's benevolent despotism was cold in death. He it was who took down the minutes of that first Conference in London which ever after should be the law and the testimony for all good Methodists. It was John Bennet who knew that there must be recourse to law to obtain the same protection the Dissenters enjoyed in the midst of persecution. His mind loved the prestige of the Church of England, but in his heart of hearts he was an incorrigible Dissenter. He loved the friendship of the priest of Haworth and was a kindred soul to Charles Wesley in his criticism of the poor tools John Wesley had joined to them in the ranks of his traveling preachers. He in fact carried on a sort of unofficial purge, and Charles Wesley and he deplored the stupidity of Brother John in their correspondence. "A friend of ours," says Charles to Bennet, "has made a preacher of a tailor; I, with God's help, will make a tailor of him again."

George Whitefield, with his work among the aristocracy and his friendship with the Countess of Huntingdon, became another desirable acquaintance. It was George Whitefield that Bennet consulted when he was playing with the idea of taking Holy Orders in the Church of England. He maintained his restless, uneasy correspondence with both Charles Wesley and with George Whitefield, and there is always an air of criticism—a feeling that things should be put right in Wesley's Connection. Bennet was not content to serve, and was jealous of the way his own societies had been swept in under Wesley's autocratic

control. Wesley had an uncomfortable way of talking of breaking his traveling preachers to the work which made a man like Bennet very uncomfortable. Were he but in the Church of England he could hold his own with this man of iron even as Grimshaw of Haworth remained independent. So the Dissenter in him revolted and drove him almost into the arms of Mother Church in order to obtain the freedom his soul loved. There was another matter that rankled with the man. He would himself be a poet, and believed sometimes he was directly filled with the divine afflatus, but the Wesley regime went directly contrary to such forms of self-expression. William Darney had got into trouble for singing his own hymns in what had been his own Yorkshire societies, and he had met Bennet and poured into his sympathetic ears all the pent-up pride and the frustration of the inhibited poet: "In the morning William Darney came to meet me and we walked out into the fields. He showed me a letter he had received from Mr. Wesley wherein he reproves him sharply of many things, particularly of singing his own hymns, which he tells him are nonsense." Cruel words indeed, and John Bennet could sympathize, for he had also wooed the Muse. He has left behind one lyric in his diary which he wrote when his mother died and which he attributes to the direct inspiration of God. It must be confessed that it is a poor performance for the Almighty and that it is strangely reminiscent of more earthly composition in its refrain, which sounds so nearly like "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

There was a world of difference between John Wesley and John Bennet. When Wesley tells of the people waiting for the Word of Life it is of God he is conscious, but when Bennet sees a poor congregation his heart is as a stone. He adds after one of his services that illuminating comment of all self-centered preachers: "I trust many went home with different thoughts of me than they brought with them." Bennet has all that nervous feeling for his congregation, all those ups and downs of an emotional nature, all the joy of treasured gossip after his great effort—"a man wept one told me." He could do well and be brave with an audience, but when he stood alone his heart failed him for fear. He dreaded opposition. Once when the women in the bands fell out, he got the stoutest of them to stand between himself and the fight. He was terribly afraid of real thunder, as such souls must ever be whose nerves are not well covered, and when the storm broke he had difficulty with his vain thoughts. He was like Charles Wesley in his collapse before an unpleasant prospect. He felt ill, and will stay in bed because he has to preach before Thomas Meyrick in the morning, and "I did not speak such fine words as he." He lay in bed pensive and sad until William Shent electrified him by bawling through the door: "Brother Bennet, arise—it is time to be gone." He was of that sensitive, nervous temperament which suffers strangely in this rough-and-tumble world and often longs for escape. If escape is not to be found, then it will certainly be devised either in fact or in an escape of

the mind. When Bennet gets wet through on the campaign he ruefully wrings out his sodden shirt and thinks he really cannot go through with it, for life like this is too hideously uncomfortable: "The enemy suggested into my mind hard thoughts of the ways of God. There was no need of so much to do. Others would certainly go to heaven easier, and then it was suggested I might do the same." So he talked with himself as he struggled out of his wet clothes and feared lest he should get the ague and be ill again: "The enemy tempted me, well, but since you are so weak in body God doesn't require it. If He does of others He does not of you." Then he adds: "I so far seemingly consented in my mind that if I was bad the next day I would only give notice to preach at each place once a month." Bennet was the sort of man o'er whom the unbeholden hangs in a night with which he could not cope. That thought of the morrow was a burden in itself: "If I was bad the next day." He was not the man to establish the Revival of Religion in England although he might be a successful wrecker of the whole campaign. Wesley's *Journal* has a different ring about it although John Bennet had the advantage of ten years of youth against his chief: "This day I was wet from morning to night with the continued rain, but I found no manner of inconvenience."

John Bennet's very weakness demanded the strength of Grace Murray, for with her it did not matter really if he were ill or well. Her assurance had rallied his weakness at death's very door and her

voice had called him back to life in that illness of his at the Orphan House when all others despaired of his life. He was a very different lover from the man Alexander Murray, but his very weakness made sufficient appeal. Grace knew that he needed her more than Wesley could even feel the need of anyone, for if he but remained sure of God he was abundantly able to look after himself. The stage was set for a very pretty little play. Did Satan construct the plot in an amused moment when he felt he could count too surely on the weakness of human nature? Or were the powers of darkness really tired of defiance from the lips of these incorrigible Methodists? They certainly sang a great deal about the Captain of their salvation and His ability to break the power of canceled sin. They also proclaimed a gospel of life in death and of heaven in hell in a provokingly paradoxical way. They had taken the leap of faith and had incomprehensively landed on their feet. They wrestled not now, but trampled on sin. Clearly the time had come to steer the precious Ship's Company straight on to the rocks, and what more fitting than to strike the whole gallant revival upon its own so much vaunted, loadstone of love?

XXVI

TRAVELING MERCIES

THE bombshell had exploded. It might look a wholly innocent one in Wesley's neat handwriting, but it threw Grace Murray into a nice perturbation. She was summoned from Newcastle to accompany the leader to Ireland. In a last despairing effort to straighten out the tangle she put pen to paper to John Bennet, saying "that if he loved her he should meet her at Sheffield: for she was sent for to Ireland, and if he did not come now she could not answer for what might follow." It is difficult to see what John Bennet could have done if he had appeared, but he took the line of least resistance and neither wrote nor came. The path which should cross that of John Wesley was too thorny for the feet of a John Bennet. He assured Grace later that he was just taking horse when his plans were upset by the death of a relative, but it is likely that he looked upon that demise as a providential intervention in matters which had become too hard for him.

Grace Murray took the road and passed by Sheffield, but she looked in vain for John Bennet there. The die was cast. She had done her best to transfer the responsibility from her own shoulders to the inadequate ones of temperamental Bennet, and now she felt free to shake rein and make for Bristol without

a wrinkle in her conscience and a certain satisfaction in her heart. She meant to throw in her lot wholeheartedly with Wesley and assay that glorious trip to Ireland and leave the rest to God. She was always fearful of taking the wrong turning, but she almost could believe just then that she might be able to combine the ship's captain and the Captain of her Salvation without disaster. And what a welcome awaited her at Bristol from that other lover—alert, joyful, girt for travel! So different a man from John Bennet, he seemed, without a doubt or complex in all his virile frame. April was upon him again and May would follow in lovely Ireland with this glorious woman of his choice. Spirits at Bristol and on the whole campaign ran very high, and the voyage, for all its storms, was such as they both rejoiced in with those red sails in the sunset and the joy of the ship's company shut in with one another and with God. But first they must get Charles Wesley safely married at Garth on the Wye, and must travel through Wales to take ship for Ireland at Holyhead.

It all reads like a glorious saga of sea and mountain. Wesley preached everywhere he went, and the people heard him gladly. Everywhere he brought new hope. Everywhere he dealt tenderly with lost souls. Everywhere Grace went with him and looked after his temporal needs as well as being the companion of his heart. All their interests were the same, and they stood the hard traveling like twin souls for courage. There were terrible Welsh mountains to scale, and such rain and wind as to rob Wesley of his voice, but

always Grace was near with her good old-fashioned remedies and her motherly advice. Wesley cannot have known that the woman had a care in the world beyond the care of his own precious person and the interests of the Kingdom of God.

This strange couple rode in to Charles Wesley's marriage at Garth House in Wales, and the bridegroom verily believed that John was the gayest soul present on that solemn occasion. It is true that this must have been a relief to Brother Charles, for the money had taken some beating up, and now the whole situation with his wife's people, the Gwynnes, hung on John Wesley as guarantor of £100 a year with his friend Blackwell in the background as a man of substance in the London business world. Charles Wesley, like his father, seems not to have had a penny in the world. He was prone to live from hand to mouth, and even his brother had to send a line to John Bennet to send the book money direct to himself and not entrust it to Brother Charles when he came into the north. It was no wonder that his prospective mother-in-law, Mrs. Gwynne, had rather doubted the wisdom of entrusting her dear Sarah to the keeping of this restless poet. It was she who had insisted on the money, and had almost broken the match because the security seemed so poor until John Wesley had come to the rescue. It reads, in Charles Wesley's *Journal*, much like the old Epworth days and the Island Poet, for Mrs. Gwynne had been asked to swallow as large a dose of faith about the value of Charles Wesley's literary compositions as

ever his father had demanded from the world at large. Charles had recourse to Vincent Perronet of Shoreham, and his letter finally convinced the skeptical mother-in-law at Garth: "Alas, Madam! What is all this world and the glories of it? How little does the world appear to that mind whose affections are set on things above! This state is what I trust you are seriously seeking after—however, I have been hitherto speaking as if Mr. Wesley's circumstances really wanted an apology: but this is not the case. The very writings of these two gentlemen are even at this time a very valuable estate; and when it shall please God to open the minds of people more, and prejudice is worn off, it will be still much more valuable. I have seen what an able bookseller has valued a great part of their works at, which is £2,500: but I will venture to say that this is not half their value. They are works which will last and sell while any sense of true religion and learning shall remain among us. However, as they are not of the same nature with an estate in land they cannot be either sold or pledged without the most manifest loss in convenience."

It will be seen how precarious was Charles Wesley's marriage dowry, and the whole thing was only made at all reasonable by his brother's name to give some sort of validity to sanguine dreams. Also Charles had a mind to go round the societies, cap in hand, had not Mr. Blackwell come to the rescue in that subscription of £100 and eased matters considerably, for "I thought it better to be obliged for a maintenance

to ten or a dozen friends than to five hundred or five thousand of the people."

Charles Wesley had married into an important family, and John Wesley was to know the drag of providing money for his penurious brother all the rest of his days. The responsibility of these commitments was destined not to be shelved for the best part of eighty years, for the Methodist Book Room was still paying out the money to Charles Wesley's widow long after both the Wesley brothers were dust. The young girl of twenty-three years who had married the penniless poet of forty contrived to live more than seventy years after that day in Wales when John Wesley and Grace Murray had rejoiced at her wedding. It is likely that John Wesley was in good spirits then because he had similar dreams himself, now made the more reasonable in the fact that his brother had actually taken the plunge. In an unaccountable way marriage seems to have scared this strange couple of Susanna Wesley's children almost out of their wits. Wesley actually got very little out of his dreams or his bargain, as Charles Wesley's marriage was the signal for him to travel less and less in the interests of the gospel, and yet his demands became greater and his interference more dangerous the less he shouldered of the real fortunes of the campaign. But now it was hid from their sight, and Charles discovered a grand new era of hymn making and drew his portrait of love with a surer hand. In his new house in Charles Street, Bristol, he was to

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write many of the best known of the songs of the Revival, and perhaps among the rest this little gem:

"O disclose Thy lovely face!
Quicken all my drooping powers;
Gasps my fainting soul for grace,
As a thirsty land for showers;
Haste, my Lord, no more delay,
Come, my Saviour, come away!

Well Thou knowest I cannot rest
Till I fully rest in Thee,
Till I am of Thee possessed,
Till, from every sin set free,
All the life of faith I prove,
All the joy and heaven of love."

It was in this atmosphere of love and to the tune of marriage bells that John Wesley and Grace Murray set out for Ireland. It was again a glorious pilgrimage, and Wesley had a good text for the beginning of the campaign at Dublin: "Beloved, if God so loved us we ought also to love one another." There was a mellowing about the man and a more tender touch throughout this Irish journey so that miracles of grace were wrought wherever he went, and men wept for joy as they thought of the love of God. He found a little garden after his own heart, and calls it "our garden" now where before it had been his alone in Savannah or had belonged to Varanese in the Cotswold Hills. Here he preached with joy and some emotion on: "Let us come boldly unto the Throne

of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need!" His mind is busy with old memories and the burden of an old tenderness, for he remembers à Kempis again and deals very gently with the sorrowing people of Ireland: "This day and the next I endeavored to see all who were weary and faint in their minds. Most of them I found had not been used with sufficient tenderness." The campaign goes on rising in a crescendo of love until men kneel breathless and spellbound and heaven came down to earth: "When I had at length pronounced the blessing no man stirred, but each stayed in his place till I walked through them." Such seasons of refreshing had never been before, but Wesley had discovered the prime secret: "God begins His work at the heart." So in a glory of spring days the work went on, and Grace Murray forgot about John Bennet and never wrote to him at all. She treated Wesley with "a tenderness not to be exprest," and made him love her more the more they traveled and conversed together. Night after night and day after day they sang sweet hymns together, and together supported that great wave of religious emotion which was setting through the British Isles like a flood: "and in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert."

The only mischief was that life could not go on like this forever. In July the travelers must return to England and Grace Murray must face the complications which had been so conveniently left behind on the other side of the Irish Sea. If she had been

quite honest with herself she would have confessed that she really was not quite sure that Wesley himself had moved a step nearer marriage for all the Irish raptures. At the bottom of her heart there lurked a secret misgiving, for when a woman gives her heart away she gives it unconditionally, but Wesley seemed to preserve his regularly beating heart in a fine state of preservation and to know none of Grace's fears in a campaign of salvation which took full toll of his powers. Human hearts were not just then the question in point. Rather there filled the scene a great urgency of endeavor. As Wesley once said, the meaning of life was really just this: "Let you and I go on to build up the City of God." Of course he was not so dense, in his blundering masculinity, as not to sense some new sadness about his once gay companion. Now with a rough sea passage before them he tried to re-establish her confidence, and be-thought him of one of the easeful form of words and little ceremonies with which his tidy mind was wont to clear up difficulties. In the presence of some witness he and she swore an oath of allegiance to one another, so he fondly believed they would still be man and wife even if shipwrecked in mid-ocean or cast away on the Shutter Rock of Lundy Island, or lost on the stormy coast of Wales. He called it a solemn contract *de praesenti*, but it was doubtless but cold comfort to a woman of Grace's nature who had once espoused that proper ship's captain, Alexander Murray, in right good earnest. So later they went on board together at ten o'clock at night and Wesley

slept soundly in perfect peace. Grace must have found it more difficult to find rest in her stuffy cabin in that little sloop bound for Bristol and the old snags and problems. The night was a night of storm, and the boat was blown hither and thither in distress. How those hymns of love and of the sea must have drummed in her head, linking up with those scenes she had witnessed in Ireland and those hundred other little incidents of life with Wesley. She was to remember hymns and the sea and Wesley to her dying day. They had come aboard on Thursday night, and on Sunday were off Minehead, but Monday saw them safely landed on Bristol Quay.

It was all over, that dream of spring in Ireland. Grace was back in that other home of Wesley's in Bristol and her heart was jealous with the thought of sharing Wesley with his other disciples. Well she knew that the Orphan House at Newcastle was not the Leader's only home of love. The New Room at Bristol had been first with him after the Foundery had been established, and now there was added the new school at Kingswood, and housekeepers in them all. Professional pride was tender just now, for Grace must submit to be a guest in Wesley's other homes, for there was no head of the table there for her as at Newcastle, where she was accustomed to reign in her own right. The sisters of the Society were not above hinting to Wesley himself something of their resentment against this too capable companion with their "You know Sister Murray must have the pre-eminence." To add to her feelings of

discomfort and regret at the passing of that wonderful Irish tour she heard much gossip among the womenfolk of the Bristol New Room. It stands today with its bare table and wooden benches just as Grace saw it in that sad July of 1749. The little rooms for the preachers open off the larger common-room above the chapel and, without, is the cobbled courtyard and the inevitable stable. Today the manger holds its place just as in Wesley's day, and on the pillars of the New Room the candlesticks still hold high their undiminished heads. If there is one place in which to recapture the beauty and the simplicity of the revival of love it is here in Broadmead, Bristol. The atmosphere is even now, to the initiate, that intangible thing which can bring tears to the eyes and reverence to stubborn knees. It was here that Grace Murray's heart failed her for fear. It was here that she heard an "idle tale" of Wesley's friendship with Molly Francis and believed that that same heart must break.

In those rooms she had talked with Wesley before they went to Ireland and told him something of John Bennet, and in a very moving scene Wesley had pressed her for her love as already promised to himself. Now that lovely thing between them seemed in ruins, besmirched by idle talk of Molly Francis, and in a vehement fit of jealousy Grace Murray wrote a letter to John Bennet. It was to be the undoing of them all, for to the man who had been left behind it was as a lifebelt thrown out to a castaway. All his love of life returned, all his pent-up passion, all

SON TO SUSANNA

his thwarted love. He was ten years younger than Wesley, and surely he could be a match for him after all. In this new mood of reassurance all things were possible to John Bennet. He sent Grace word: "He would meet her when she came into the North."

XXVII

THE RIVALS

THE road from Bristol to London now carries a stream of motor traffic, and, unheeding, the travelers of today fly past old toll-house and village pump, and past those old cottages where once John Wesley and Grace Murray rode together. The signposts show the way to Landsdown Hill where Aspasia's ancestor, Sir Bevil Granville, once died for the Stuarts and where now Wesley's Kingswood School stands in a strange rapprochement of history. But in 1749 the school was at the colliers' Kingswood near Bristol and housed some pitiable atoms of humanity, and Jacky Murray among the rest. There the only surviving child of that passionate marriage lived laborious days far away from his mother, who now sat her horse disconsolately and followed John Wesley up the London Road. And this man, riding there, had told her that should God also give them children they must all be brought up at that Kingswood School, for so there should be no hindrance caused to the glorious work of the campaign for the salvation of England. It was not the way that Alexander Murray had talked. He had come posting home from sea to be near her in the storm, and the children had been part and parcel of that mighty love he bore her. Now there was almost an inhumanity about the

Wesley who could plan out matters so long ahead and reason out human loves and lives in terms to suit the pattern of God's requirements. Just how much was he in earnest over this very question of marriage, after all?

Grace Murray's mind was in a turmoil. There was no one to whom she could unburden her anxieties, no one she dare ask for advice, no one safe enough to trust with such a secret as she carried in her bosom. So they came to London and to that other house in the Moorfields where it had all begun for her, now nearly ten years ago. What other idle tales should she hear now to turn her heart sick with fear? In despair she was forced into speaking of that load of anxiety which she carried, and she hinted "at a distance" something of her trouble to one of the sisters at the Foundery. It seems to have been to the wife of Thomas Maxfield that Grace unburdened herself. He had known Wesley's mother and was one of the old brigade and that first lay-preacher of all the fraternity, so that she had hopes that here might be found some kind of knowledgeable help. E. Maxfield was emphatic, even on only half a hint given, but she was emphatic in condemnation: "Sister Murray, never think of it! I know you thoroughly. It will never do. The people would never suffer you and your spirit would not bear their behavior. You have not humility enough, or meekness, or patience. You would be miserable all your life, and that would make him miserable too. So that instead of strengthening you would weaken his hands. If you love

yourself, or if you love him, never think of it more." It was good advice, but none the more palatable for that, and it rankled badly as Grace looked out on that company at the Foundery and tossed the question to and fro in her troubled mind. She dared tell Wesley nothing of her trouble, and set out for the North still brooding darkly on the enigma of his heart.

It was at that old home town of Epworth that the couple ran straight into John Bennet. He had been as good as his word, with courage newborn from Grace's packet in his post-bag, and here with David Trathan he had straddled right across Wesley's road. Epworth never seemed a very lucky place for John Wesley although his heart should have been mounting in praises there as the spot where first the Brand was plucked from the burning. He was not lacking in courage, and seems to have gone straight to the point in an awkward encounter, but was struck dumb when Bennet said: "She has sent me all your letters." Now what on earth had he said in them? Had he told her that when he thought of her he thought of God? Wesley began to think quickly, and his mind turned back on its old unhappy track. Gone was the glorious freedom of that friendship in the Lord, gone the balance of all resolved complexes. Instinctively there was a swinging backward, and a phrase from the past rose to the level of consciousness: "I thought it was not proper that she and I should converse any more together." It was written to Grace Murray in a sad little note at Epworth in 1749,

but it reads more like a phrase from the affair of Miss Sophy and John Wesley of the unwarmed heart. So Grace Murray read it, and got the chill of the thing into her very being. In an agony of tears she sought out Wesley and begged him never to speak like that again unless he did design to kill her. All reserve was now gone, and she poured out there the love of her heart for him until he was stirred to the depths and wept as heartily as she. It was at that very moment that John Bennet returned to the attack. He had found a new strength in his own weakness, for he had loved her so much, and, in her, his own salvation. With a determination which staggered his leader, Bennet claimed Grace Murray as his right.

It took some moments for John Wesley to know where he was, but gradually those old reasoning powers got to work and he began painfully to figure it all out as in the unregenerate days: "If each insist on his claim it will be cutting her in sunder. She can never survive it. She will die in ye contest. So I again determined to give her up." He should have known that it was no time for logic and reason. A woman like Grace Murray had never yet been afraid of that sort of pulling-in-pieces death, but what she did fear was that cool, withdrawing look of reason on the face of her lover. Here was no woman like Miss Sophy, looking from one rival to the other and noting a contrast in eye, mouth, chin and nose as though she were drawing their portraits, but here stood Grace Murray, looking from one to the other

for salvation. From whence should her help come? Well she knew that had Alexander Murray stood where Wesley now stood, John Bennet would have been up to his neck in the Trent and she herself safe under lock and key. But now she saw Wesley, standing irresolute, with his thoughts turned inward when only a bold frontal attack could have cut the tangle of this lovers' knot. The truth was that he was back in the bad old Epworth atmosphere, with memories of old terrors and old inhibitions. Was it not here that he had declared that he would never marry because he despaired of finding such another woman as his mother? Was it not here that Susanna's iron method had done its best and its worst for him? Was it not here that his father had laughed at him and scorned his reasoning propensities with his "Sweetheart, I protest"? John Bennet was behaving distinctly better, with that urge at his heart of love and despair. A desperate energy was now upon that restless, ambitious man, and he saw his advantage and took it. Until far into the night he and David Trathan stood over the wretched woman, and urged her on and on until she declared, "I will have John Bennet."

Their arguments would take her on the line of least resistance, for always it had seemed a dream that the great leader could love as Alex Murray had loved. They would tell her what was plain to see, at the moment, that really John Wesley would never reason himself up to the point of marriage—the point that Bennet had arrived at long ago with no aid from his

reason at all. Grace was lovely to look at and delightful to know, and, withal, had that deeper, more settled beauty and tenderness of the child of God. That such a treasure should come in any man's way only to produce his exquisite reasons was a thing to chill the heart of any woman. By contrast Bennet shone with ardor and real human love unmixed of angel matter. Did they tell her the text of the sermon her hero had just preached at Epworth? Its words held a solemn portent for a woman's heart: "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" So came the fatal answer: "I will have John Bennet," and the other John was left with his cold reasoning and nothing better to look at than his father's grave in Epworth churchyard. But it had all been too much for Grace Murray, and she was obliged to seek her bed in a state of utter prostration.

Someone told John Wesley: "Sister Murray is exceeding ill," and of course at a stroke his reasoned determination was in ruins. He went swiftly through Epworth streets to her lodging, and passed through the door and into her bedroom where she lay with her memories and her anxieties. She was stretched on that lodging-house bed and, as he sat beside her, despair seemed to loose her tongue, for in a torrent of emotion she said: "My dear sir, how can you possibly think I love any other better than you? I love you a thousand times better than ever I loved John Bennet in my life. But I know not what to do. I am afraid if I don't marry him he will run mad."

Then feeling for a crumpled letter she held it up for Wesley's inspection, and he read there words of hot human love enough to scorch every reason out of his own austere little body. He seems to have retreated "more perplexed than ever," and John Bennet took his place at the bedside, and as the shades of night fell he urged her yet again. She answered that she would have him.

It seems likely that Grace Murray was playing for time and that she was conscious of a very real danger unknown to John Wesley. That Bennet would run mad was no idle tale. Already she had sent one man to perdition with denying him what his heart craved in those old Newcastle days, but now besides Bennet's soul she had the issues of Wesley's great campaign in her keeping. This man Bennet, antagonized and half demented, would certainly do mischief. Already for the Ship's Company there were rocks ahead. There had sprung up a dangerous criticism of the preachers, and tale-bearers were busy fermenting gossip up and down the kingdom. Some said that earthly love and heavenly love were all one, and that, were a man once in grace, he had the right to take the wife of any other brother so circumstanced. That the taint of such gossip should come near the leader himself was unbearable to Grace, who knew so well the honor of the immaculate little man. Well she knew how the world would hear of all their journeyings together, with John Bennet to tell the tale. Also she knew that there was a deep resentment of authority in the man Bennet. She had not ridden with him over the

Derbyshire hills for nothing. He was the inveterate Dissenter for all his friendship with Whitefield, Charles Wesley and the Church party. This in itself was but a symptom of his resentment against the Wesley rule. She who knew both men so well could sense the breath of mutiny and hear with sharpened ears far murmurs of disloyalty. This man John Wesley, whom she loved far more than any other man, was in terrible danger through her, for far off she could hear rumblings of a storm which might ruin both him and his glorious work for the salvation of England. They were really back at the same old question there debated round Epworth tables, as in the old days, in the famous battles of Church and Dissent. Now the glorious irregulars of Wesley's own preachers were taking a hand in that game which had worn down Susanna Wesley and embittered all the well-springs of her spouse adored.

It looked very much as though John Wesley was never really to get away from his own past for all his heart-warming in Aldersgate Street. The net was being spread for the feet of the unwary, but if Grace Murray could save him she certainly would, and that in spite of himself. It was well for him that, in her he had encountered that kind of loyalty peculiar to the true and tender north. It must have been Grace risen from her sickbed, who managed to extricate herself and Wesley from the attentions of Bennet and his squire Trathan. She had contrived to smother down ruffled feathers and to allow Bennet to depart to Sheffield in some sort of peace. He declared that

the dispute and the omen had ended in his favor, but his heart was full of agitation as he continued his preaching tour and remembered all that had been said and done at Epworth. He declared, not without reason: "This day I shall remember as long as I have breath."

John Wesley and Grace Murray went forward to Newcastle, and there in their own familiar home a greater sense of security prevailed. Wesley felt his old weapon of logic again strong in his hand, and he laid it pretty thoroughly across his rival in a long letter to Bennet in which he put up a barrage of reason chiefly on the ground of Bennet's having tried to rob him of his housekeeper. Even now he would not go straight to the point, but blinded himself with a legal rigmarole which reads like leaves from an enticement of a maid case. Grace was prevailed on to slip in a short note with this lengthy epistle saying that both she and Bennet had done wrong in not consulting Wesley before they agreed on a union between themselves. Both these precious missives were entrusted to William Spent, who in his turn never delivered them. This man was another of Wesley's heroes who had had the honor of introducing Methodism into his own native town of Leeds, but he was another of the queer independable ones whom Wesley was sometimes inclined to trust to his own hurt. Instead of these highly reasonable letters being delivered, another one was found somewhere in the Orphan House at Newcastle, and this was duly delivered, not to Bennet, but to Charles Wesley. Now

that letter was not one John had written to Bennet, but one he had written to Grace Murray. It all reads as though she had been careless with it, or perhaps the case had rather been: "I sent a letter to my love and on the way I dropped it. And one of you has picked it up and put it in his pocket." At least the tale has been handed down to posterity by a descendant of that Jeannie Keith of the Orphan House who had criticized Sister Murray and had been pronounced "a woman of exquisite subtlety."

It was true that there were enemies on every side, and well Grace knew it. Also she knew they would stoop to anything in their jealousy and hatred of her, for so she had learned at the Foundery "the people will never stand you." She was thankful to push on with Wesley again to Berwick, for her mind was now made up and she was determined to stake her all on one last throw with fortune. As they rode forward through those September days and left Newcastle farther and farther behind, she longed for further escape from those cruelly gossiping tongues, and stealing her hand into Wesley's she asked that they might fly together somewhere, anywhere, to be at peace and alone together. Of course it was not reasonable, but then neither was this vagabond life they were living, so intimately, and yet so separately. She tried one more request, and this time she begged with all her heart—might they be married at once? She knew the danger of those talking women she had left behind her, but only let Wesley and her be properly married and she knew she was quite equal

to holding her own with them all. It was this traveling together towards marriage and yet never getting there which was so terribly trying and also so bad for the ultimate fortunes of the Kingdom of God.

Wesley was now really alarmed, although it was sweet to have such a woman so humbly craving for his love and offering hers to him without stint or fear. He thought quickly on his old lines and felt his way, as with Miss Sophy, when he had put up all the Indians of North America against her as a protection. Grace Murray's heart must have failed her when she heard the ordered list of what must be done before the wedding bells could ring: "I told her before this could be done it would be needful (1) to satisfy John Bennet, (2) to procure my brother's consent, and (3) to send an account of the reasons on which I proceeded to every helper and every society in England, at the same time desiring their prayers." The ready tears cannot have been far off as she faltered out that she would not be willing to stay above a year. Wesley was at once ready with consolation: "Perhaps less time will suffice." It was cruel, but he never could just make up his mind to belong to anyone except to himself and to God, and if he could only put off the evil day he would be able to enjoy the present moment very much more to his satisfaction. But he persuaded himself that he was really getting on with the business, and was putting the reasons on which he proceeded in order by asking Grace to give him a full account of her life as a step in the right direction.

They were at Berwick, with the Methodist Societies, from Saturday until Thursday, and it was now that the burning story of the ship's captain, Alexander Murray, was written down. There seems to have been no reserve at all between the narrator and the amanuensis who took it all down "from my mouth." It makes even today a moving story of passion, of sacrifice and of that ultimate intangible something called the love of God. Wesley must have enjoyed it, but what were the thoughts of the woman who sat there with folded hands and thought back into that old life of love and agony? Before her eyes passed every detail of life with her first husband. She heard again the very words he had said—ah, ah, the wooing on't! She thrilled again with her own conviction as she later came to withstand him to the face: "He swore I should hear Mr. Wesley no more. I replied: 'You are ye Lord of my body, but Christ is the Lord of my soul. If I were to yield to you in this I should lose my soul, and my blood would be upon your head.' " She saw him again, raving with anger and stamping with rage, as he thundered: "You shall leave them or me," and she remembered how she had had the hardihood to answer: "I love you above anyone on earth, but I will leave you and all that I have sooner than I will leave Christ!" Surely Wesley must have seen where it was tending and have been encouraged to believe he would be safe with such a woman, yet his comment after this passionate unbosoming was disappointing: "This endeared her to me more than before; and yet at ye

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same time strongly inclined me to believe that ye severe discipline was designed to prepare her for a comforter of many, a Mother in Israel." It was not Israel or the many that Grace was coveting just then. She had been sitting for hours telling an old tale of love to a man whom her heart loved more than them all. Surely he meant her to be his, and yet, how could she know with this extraordinary John Wesley? He had asked her to bring the best of her sticks of furniture with her when she came into residence at his Orphan House, so surely he meant her never to leave? He was such a man for good furniture and so particular over his desks and the orderly arrangement of his possessions. Could it be possible that after all that had passed between them he could look on her only as an interesting museum piece and so catalogue her in this rather ruthless way of writing down one's very heart's blood in terms of mothers and sisters in Israel?

XXVIII

CONVERSATION PIECE

THE time at Berwick had been undeniably sweet, and surely much ground had been gained. Grace rode back to Newcastle with John Wesley in more intimate conversation than ever now that she had offered upon his altar the whole story of her old-time love. Wesley was at his best in just such surroundings. The joys of the road always thrilled him, and with a good companion who never complained, whatever the way or the weather, he found it all exhilarating and talked well. He had had many of these confessions and life stories from his converts, and had early grasped the importance of such unburdening of the perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart. He was peculiarly fitted to deal with troubled souls from his belief that the love of God was really the warp and woof of life, and also the ghost of Uncle Matthew always managed to accompany him when he was embarked on these perilous explorations in soul surgery.

So Wesley talked to Grace Murray, and so they came together to Newcastle, and even there could not have done with sweet words. Far into the night they talked and talked, and could not make an end. Wesley had always loved the scene in Eden and Milton's phrase of the conversation of the first of all

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lovers: "With thee conversing I forget all time." He had rejoiced to find the same thing possible with God, and the line had been incorporated in one of those jubilant hymns of the Methodist Revival. In the old days in Oxford or in Georgia Wesley had never forgotten time when talking with God, for he clocked in every hour and each moment of prayer, but, since his conversion, all that had been changed. Now, in addition, he had found a woman with whom he could combine both forms of rapture in a glory of talk and of prayer. The thing called time was eliminated altogether. The hymns of the Methodists sprang from just such vivid experiences of the road, of human companionship and the presence of God:

"Talk with us, Lord, Thyself reveal,
 Whilst here o'er earth we rove;
Speak to our hearts, and let us feel
 The kindling of Thy love.

With Thee conversing, we forget
 All time, all toil and care.
Labor is rest and pain is sweet,
 If Thou, my Lord, art there."

Grace Murray began to feel the ground more secure under her feet and opened up her heart to him there in their beloved Orphan House where first he had spoken to her of his love. She told him honestly, "In time past I could have married another if you would have given me away, but now it is impossible that we should part—God has united us forever."

Such communion might be very sweet in that old room at Newcastle where so much had passed between them, but John Wesley saw he was getting more involved than he at first believed, so he performed a characteristic volte-face by betaking himself off to Grace's critics to learn if she really was all she seemed to be. It was a highly reasonable proceeding, but not just what an ordinary man would do after such a night of love and blessed conversation. How Wesley could solmenly hold that court upon the character of his splendid friend baffles the imagination, for the things against her were so trivial and her accusers were but a pack of jealous women. They said she had spent ten shillings on an apron and bought a Holland shift, that she would not lend her saddle to Mrs. Williams, that she was proud and insolent and rode into the town with Mr. Wesley alone, and that she bought a Joseph before she wanted it. This last item was a peculiarly feminine sin, for the Joseph was for horse travel, and she was not above wanting to look her best on those glorious expeditions with Wesley over the hills and far away. Her friend and champion, having spent the best part of two days in such investigations, was able at last to come to the conclusion that "jealousy and envy were ye real ground of most of these accusations." So off they set again, complete in Joseph, and with the disputed saddle, and came at last to Hindley Hill with Christopher Hopper and to the house of Hannah Broadwood. Here, at Grace Murray's request, they renewed that contract made before in Dublin ere

they sailed the seas to Bristol. It was Grace's plea for a legalizing of their relationship, which Wesley had said could not be consummated in marriage before a year had run its weary course of months and days. She now stood up before these strange Methodists to take this oath of allegiance to Wesley, and before she said the words Christopher Hopper saw that she was trembling all over. Love was having its way with her at last, and no longer did it seem a dream that Wesley should love her even as Alex Murray had loved, even as men love for whose companionship her soul had long fainted and watched in vain. But old campaigner Hopper was having no raptures, and he stopped the ceremony with his blunt: "Sister Murray, have you any scruple on your mind? If you have the least scruple I beg you would stop. Pray do." But with a glad smile she answered, "I have none at all." For what scruple could be left now that Wesley and she had had between them what was told at Berwick and what was said, hand in hand, on the road and by night in the room at Newcastle?

In one hour Wesley bade her goodbye and took horse to Whitehaven. She followed him out of the little stone-roofed house and stood watching him up the hill, and as he rode he turned and saw her and went on his way rejoicing. He had told himself that now neither life nor death could part them, but from the time he came to Whitehaven he had "something hanging on my mind which I knew not how to explain." The weight was there and he was unhappy. It was a secret haunting fear, for no longer could

he disguise the fact from himself that Grace Murray was very much in love with him. Also he could not forget that tale of Alexander, home from the seas, and the fever of those short, blissful furloughs of which Grace had not spared him details. On Sunday the words struck on his heart: "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." It was the text of Sophy's betrayal, and he was going over all the old ground again and remembering how he suffered then. The fire of love and the flames of desire were ever a terror to him, for he had been a brand plucked from the burning and whenever it kindled anywhere near him he was uneasy. Now when he fell asleep the fear brought out its puppet costume and walked for him not in Williamson's likeness, but in the likeness of John Bennet. The quick question of dreamland was, "Where is Grace Murray?" and the answer came as quickly: "At Chinley." Wesley woke in a moment, and from that time could sleep no more. He lay tossing and thinking in great discomfort, and turned backwards and forwards in his mind the mighty question of marriage. He was afraid and unhappy, and when he arose and put pen to paper, the first words that came to him for his love letter to Grace read very strangely, even to himself:

"There is I know not what of sad presage
That tells me we shall never meet again."

Which remark looks very much as though the dream

of Chinley and John Bennet had been a wish fulfilment dream rather than the promptings of a guilty conscience. And it is true that the words to the eyes of Grace Murray turned her sick with apprehension. All her high spirits were gone, and she sank again into the slough of despond with all the beating about hither and thither to find some firm place to ground her friendship with Wesley upon. Where should safety be found, both for themselves and for the Kingdom of God?

Before, she had kept John Bennet as a sort of sally-port in the interests of this Kingdom; now he was far away, and she knew she had thrown in her lot with Wesley for better or for worse. She had been content to wait a year only because he ordered it so, but she believed it was bad policy and that every day of their friendship endangered the fortunes of the Ship's Company, which were dearer to Wesley than any single person could ever be. "If you love him, Sister Murray, never think of it more." So they had told her in London, and she knew it was true if John Wesley had fallen back into his old way of hesitation and into thinking too precisely upon the event. They looked like debating the matter for years and years although she had already given herself to him in mind and spirit, when she trembled with love in the presence of Christopher Hopper in the little stone house at Hindley Hill.

She would have known there was good ground for her fear could she have seen John Wesley at Whitehaven. But also, if she could have seen him, she

might have been comforted by the fact that the strength of his love was to be gauged by the strength of his fear of desire and its kindling flame. For the first time in his glorious friendship with this woman the old conflict had emerged. The old symptoms had returned. He was shivering with nervous prostration and in a fever, and if Varanese had seen him she would have told him that he looked like a corpse. He thought of taking a vomit and going to bed, and must have longed for John, his old friend of Savannah, who had helped him through similar storms with Miss Sophy. But there was now one great difference—all the world had gone out after this man to hear him speak of the love of God and so he could not get to bed just when he felt he must die, for "when I came home, seeing a vast congregation in the market-place, I could not send them empty away. And while I was speaking to them God remembered me and strengthened me both in soul and body." Things would indeed be serious with John Wesley if he could not preach. The Lord had a wonderful way of lifting every care and anxiety from the man's heart could he but proclaim the Grace of God and gather in the outcasts of men to the Lover of their souls.

And so to bed, but in the morning things were not nearly so simple. A species of storm or species of hurricane struck the house where John Wesley lay. The plot was gathering itself up in a complication of motive and a blaze of passion sufficient to wreck any Ship's Company. Someone looking so very like

the ghost of the old Rector of Epworth had entered from the wings—was even now knocking down the door to obtain a conference with Brother John. It was Charles Wesley, and moreover, it was Brother Charles flouncing and bouncing in exquisite rage. Now, John Wesley secretly dreaded the visits of this brother of his. At the best he disarranged his papers and lost his books as his father had contrived to put grit in the domestic machine of his wife Susanna. At the worst this Brother Charles had power to upset all Wesley's dearest plans. The trouble of it was he could never be quite sure of his loyalty. Charles loved, as his father, the big people, and was friendly with Whitefield's aristocratic party, who taught those horrible decrees of John Calvin. But now there was a greater urgency than matters of faith laid on the heart of Charles Wesley. He had a secret terror that he saw his bread and butter disappearing out of the corner of his eye. His income, for all his precarious loyalty, depended on the fortunes of the campaign and upon the sale of those books which the Methodist preachers took about the country with them. Now Charles Wesley could write of those same preachers with a sneer and speak impatiently of his brother's folly in appointing such poor tools, but his own £100 a year was guaranteed by the extent of their success. John Wesley could truly say that the money he made was not being laid by for his own wife and children who were yet unborn, for very truly it was being drafted into the coffers of Brother Charles and of those other importunate members of the Wesley

family. John himself gave away nearly all that he had, but now, to Charles Wesley's horror, this generous mainstay of the penurious was threatening to produce both wife and children himself. It was reasonable to suppose that even Grace Murray could not live entirely upon air, and Charles Wesley had flown northwards to prevent any possibility of her ever having to attempt that miracle. It was so startlingly clear to Brother Charles that John Wesley must never marry that it swelled all his little frame with anger to think that the man was as much as contemplating it. He was bursting with rage, and must have cut a figure just like a pocket edition of the Rector of Epworth. His string of epithets was as gloriously fluent.

XXIX

STRATAGEMS

THE brothers faced one another in that house at Whitehaven, and John Wesley must almost have believed that his father had risen from the dead. Charles was storming in just the same old family manner. Did not John see, the blockhead, that "All our preachers will leave us, all our societies disperse if you marry so mean a woman!" "Are you in your senses or not?" "Love has put out your eyes." And then the crowning thrust: "She was your mistress before she was your wife." Could it be real, this torrent of abuse from that brother who had sung with him of the love of God and had watched with him the falling of fire from heaven? It was too real, and for all the world like a sparring match between Susanna and the Rector of Epworth in the old days when it was "a sorrow peculiar to our family that your father and I never think alike." So backwards and forwards the argument went, and the voice of the accuser rose in a wild crescendo of fury: "She is low born—her parents were laboring people." To which the quiet John answered: "This weighs nothing with me, as it does not prevent either her grace or her gifts. Besides, whoever I marry, I believe it will not be a gentlewoman. I despair of finding any such so qualified." The anger rose with redoubled fury:

"She is only your servant," and the irritatingly cool John replied: "I therefore like her the better—by living so long with her under one roof I am as secure against being deceived in her as I can well be against being deceived by anyone. Indeed I should scruple marrying any woman who had not done so for some time." But Charles still thundered: "She has traveled with you six months, and people will say she was your mistress before she was your wife." To which grand accusation the imperturbable John replied: "And let them say it; it would hurt just as much as a thousand things they have said before. But let them know withal I should never marry any woman till I had proof that she both could and would travel with me." What could Charles Wesley more say than a final burst of vitriol in that "She is engaged to another." "Where?" asked John. "At Epworth," came the pat answer, for Charles had heard all about that scene when Bennet asked: "Will you marry me?" and she replied: "I will." He had made it his business to go round by Newcastle and Leeds on his way to Whitehaven, and he had picked up every bit of gossip as he went. He had been really alarmed when he heard that Wesley was incredibly in love with the woman and showed it before all the society, for Charles Wesley knew his brother's reasoned procedure and had never objected before to his friendship with Grace Murray. ~~Before, it had~~ seemed always safe and removed from ardors and not "beyond all sense and reason" as now the gossips reported it. They had both been present at his wed-

ding in far-away Wales, but perhaps Charles had time to think of nothing but himself just then. He tells us that Christ and His disciples were bidden to his marriage, there where the grounds of Garth House stretched down to the sylvan Wye, but he says nothing of Grace Murray. Perhaps, in great humility, she ate her wedding breakfast in the kitchen. Then, he had not objected to the two traveling together, and had been all friendship with an eye on John and his marriage dowry. Now, he was well-nigh impatient with rage. He was like his father, jealous of love in another and jealous that John, who could be so useful to him, should think of marrying at all. As he stormed an idea came to him, an idea born of old memories and springing from that linking of his two last accusations about the mistress before the wife and the mention of the name of John Bennet. Now he was on firmer ground and he knew just what to do because long ago his father had taught him what to do when that same sequence of thought was presented to him. When Hetty Wesley was once considered in that light the Rector of Epworth had married her, willy-nilly, to a drunken plumber who had once solicited her hand. Charles Wesley turned on his heel, sprang to horse, and rode straight for Hindley Hill. He left John pensive and evidently robbed of all action, as the first thing he did when alone was to sit down and meditate. Taking a piece of paper he wrote out laboriously all the reasons for marriage and all the objections, all the qualities his wife should have, and then wound up with a sigh of

relief and a glorious Q.E.D. in the words: "Therefore all my seven arguments against marriage are totally set aside. Nay, some of them seem to prove both that I ought to marry and that Grace Murray is ye Person." It all looked very neat and worked out beautifully on paper, but it was no time for reasoning with Charles Wesley riding hell for leather through that wild country of rolling mountain. It might give John Wesley a greater sense of security and prove an opiate to his ruffled nerves, but it was no help to the woman Grace Murray left behind at Hindley Hill. Upon her Charles Wesley burst. Into that little stone house he rushed like a tornado, and even as he kissed her he gasped out his breathless greeting: "Grace Murray, you have broken my heart." The next moment he was stretched at her feet in the dearest of dead faints.

Susanna Wesley had had some trouble in training her children to speak the truth. Their father would not observe her reasonable ruling in the matter and was more prone to frighten them to death and falsehood. Some, she knew, would speak the truth handsomely whatever befell, but Hetty was a difficult case, and from Charles Wesley's actions now it seems likely that he too might have been one of Susanna's failures. His mind was busy weaving a plot as good as ever threw the fat into the fire of a Shakespearian drama. The inevitable letter must have been written somewhere between Whitehaven and Hindley Hill, and it was presented at once to Grace Murray when the messenger regained consciousness. It read, and

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was supposed to read, as though John had stood at his brother's elbow as Charles composed the fatal words. When Grace had sufficiently restored the victim of an unkind world, this was the letter she was bidden to read for her sins:

"MY DEAR SISTER AND FRIEND,

"What shall I say to you? I would not willingly grieve *you* though you have wellnigh broke my heart: and still you will be the occasion of bringing down my hairs with sorrow to the grave. Neither my soul nor my body will ever recover the wound; in this life I mean. But *there* the weary are at rest, there all tears are wiped away from our eyes. Fain would I hope that you can say something in your defense (when I come to talk to you), which now I know not. But the case thus appears to me: You promised J.B. to marry him—since which you have engaged yourself to another. How is this possible? And who is that other? One of such importance that his doing so dishonest an action would destroy himself and me and the whole work of God. It was on the very brink of ruin, but the snare is broken and we are delivered. I am returning with my brother straight to London, but could not leave the country without writing to you. Still I *will* suspend my judgment in that love which hopeth all things. But O! how humbled, how thankful ought you to be at your almost miraculous deliverance! Had not the Lord restrained you, what a scandal had you brought upon the Gospel. Nay, and you would have left

your name as a curse upon God's people. But I spare you and hope in ignorance you did it. Be not therefore troubled overmuch. I never intend to speak a hard word to you about it, but pray for you and love you, till we meet at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."

The mischief was that only that morning Grace had received that other ambiguous letter from her lover at Whitehaven, and this new effort might reasonably follow on that. She had been very low-spirited when she read the first letter, for she had really come to believe that a great future lay ahead with John Wesley, and had dreamed of honors for the Kingdom of God brought about by their own union in the bonds of the Gospel: "My soul is athirst for God and the good of souls. I find my former zeal returned. I trust I shall be more bold in the cause of Christ than ever—the Lord hath brought strange things to pass what I never looked for. Praise the Lord, O my soul, who hath cast thy lot in a fair ground." So she had written on Monday to Sister Proctor and had asked her for a warning if John Bennet came to Newcastle, for "I must not see him. It will tear my soul to pieces seeing I can by no means help him now, for whom God hath joined together no man can put asunder." So any woman might have reasoned after what had passed between John Wesley and herself, but she reckoned without the late Rector of Epworth and his wife Susanna. Their spirits were walking abroad on those bare-

backed mountains of Cumberland that September morning in 1749.

It was now Wednesday morning, September the 27th, and the fainting Charles Wesley was gradually reviving in the little stone house at Hindley Hill. He had arrived about 11 A.M. and, true to a Judas standard of things, he had betrayed Grace with a kiss. He had followed up that advantage with a spectacular faint and the reading of his letter. About one o'clock he contrived to get her onto his horse with a promise that he would take her straight to John Bennet and his brother and so straighten out the tangle. The tangle was really of his own making, for neither John nor Grace were acting at all like people with guilty consciences. The man whose conscience was uneasy was in reality the hero Charles himself. Along that road to Newcastle he seemed to hear a horse following him. Grace Murray was perched on his pillion and it was difficult to look round, but any moment he felt that those flying feet must apprehend them. So great was the tension that he turned right out of his road with a sweet consciousness that he had now really given his brother the slip and could go more slowly. "He used several stratagems to elude his pursuer, and at last turned out of the Newcastle road and made straight for Durham." On they went until they were well lost, and were thankful to put up for the night with Farmer John Brown who lived at Newlands on the borders of Northumberland and Durham. Grace Murray made a great effort, in company, to look as though nothing was being done

sufficiently out of the way to attract notice, but when once she got to bed her courage failed her. There, in a strange house, "she lay tumbling and tossing to and fro as one in deep distress." The stratagems were closing in on her, and she felt terribly apprehensive as to the motives and the actions of this volcanic Charles Wesley. With a true woman's insight she believed that he really was not speaking the truth. And yet John Wesley might have changed his mind and it might be true, as Charles said, that all the societies were ready to fly to pieces. She knew she would do anything in her power to keep "one she dearly loved from ruin," but in the darkness of that night she could not tell just how true those bogeys of Charles Wesley's were. And always dancing before her eyes, as she lay, were pictures of John on the road, John preaching, John singing his hymns, John bending over her in tenderness and holding her hand in his. They were indeed memories that bless and burn, or, as the wretched woman herself described them, "a sword piercing her heart." So all night she lay and never slept at all, and in the morning arose to breakfast with Farmer Brown and Charles Wesley, and then to horse again and so to Newcastle. Perhaps, after all, if she could see John Bennet, and, if he really loved her, he might be able to clear up some of the difficulty and at least rescue her from this ride of the Valkyries with Charles Wesley. When she heard Bennet was at Newcastle she cheerfully said: "Let us go—let us go to him." But this was not at all what Charles Wesley intended.

STRATAGEMS

He had not ridden over all those horrid mountains and gone almost stark staring mad with anger and been lost and supported Grace Murray on his horse all the way to Newcastle to have her twist poor Bennet round her little finger just like that. He deposited her at Ferry Hill and rode on alone to Newcastle.

There were more stratagems yet to be worked out, and Master Charles could do them better without those honest eyes of Grace Murray fixed on him. He had an interesting interview with John Bennet, in which he tried to work that poor man into a fever of jealousy against Wesley. He laid all the blame on his brother, and roundly declared that he, John Wesley, had used all his art and authority to seduce another man's wife. He fulminated to some purpose, and together they went to the Orphan House to tell all there of the sins of the leader. The whole place was in an uproar, and, in that room where once Grace and Wesley had seen a vision of sweet things, the air was rent and blistered with jealousies and angry complaints. One saw Mr. Wesley already in hell fire. Jane Keith was quite positive about it: "John Wesley is a child of ye devil." John Bennet brought on the top stone with worthy emphasis: "If John Wesley is not damned there is no God."

Brother Charles had exploded the gunpowder, but there remained the last stratagem of all, and he did not suppose that could fail. Having raised the storm, he slipped out of the house to fetch Grace Murray, and brought her back, tired and weary-eyed, into this

vitriolic atmosphere of the Orphan House at Newcastle. There John Bennet stood waiting for her, and when she saw him she made him the amends which his love deserved, for she told him handsomely that she knew she had used him ill and she begged that he would forgive her. She was quite positive she would go no further than that, and told them all: "I will do nothing till I have seen Mr. Wesley." But Charles had not yet done with his wiles, for at that moment, from the wings, entered one who should swing the whole action of the play to the right-about. Word was brought to Grace Murray to the effect that John Wesley had really given her up and had sent his orders by this messenger that she should go to some place among the country societies where she might live privately. Now came the well-arranged chorus: "Good God! What will the world say: He is tired of her, and so thrusts his whore into a corner! Sister Murray, will you consent to this?" To which she answered, "No, I will die first."

In that awful meeting Grace Murray had seen several things quite clearly and, as swiftly, made her decision. She knew how to act because she loved John Wesley so purely and so wholeheartedly that self did not just then come into the business. She had heard with horror that people, quite glibly, were speaking of her as "Mr. Wesley's whore." Charles Wesley, being the complete gentleman, had said "mistress" to John Wesley at Whitehaven, but by the time he reached Newcastle he had allowed the

local worthies to translate that word into the vernacular. As they stood round the woman, baiting her with their obscenities, she saw that great revival of love and religion already laid in the dust. The world would say it was the inevitable end of those strange love-songs and that daring imagery of the Godhead which read so like the imagery of the sons of Adam. Already there was that heresy of lust and the community in wives. Already Westly Hall was gone to the dogs with his mistresses and his patient wife. Had not the great Count Zinzendorf himself traveled to America thus accompanied? He was head and leader of all the Moravians, and John Wesley owed him so much already in the success of his own campaign. Zinzendorf was not a whit ashamed of his "Spirit Bride," for were not all things possible to the lovers of God? Old Oglethorpe would surely join hands with Uncle Matthew for once and agree that he had always foretold the ruin of these precious Wesleys—"Your history would be made a play or tale of."

No, not if it depended on Grace Murray. Never would she let the world talk like that about John Wesley. Never would she let them drag those lovely hymns and that Emmaus experience of Aldersgate Street in the mud. There was a natural body, and quite well she knew it, but, thank God, there was a spiritual body too. The next world should make amends for the crucifixion of this one. It might be that the floods would wash her down, but that could not be helped. She would make her supreme sacrifice

SON TO SUSANNA

in order to keep the Captain of her Salvation and the ship's captain forever apart, and each in his own order. So searching out John Bennet with those kindling eyes she said quite simply: "I will have John Bennet if he will have me."

XXX

CRISIS

IN far Whitehaven John Wesley had appeased the shades of his mother. He had demonstrated his love by reason. It had always been Susanna's method, when life with the Rector of Epworth had been trying, to turn to such sweet conference as John Wesley had just held. She would have question and answer with her daughters and write down all for her own comfort. Again in her lengthy letters to her sons she indulged in this same blissful antidote of quiet argument. But now came a reaction. The mind, once lulled by all his seven arguments against marriage and their refutation, sprang forward with a sudden unreasonable swiftness. What was Brother Charles doing? John Wesley was all at once very uncomfortable and went to horse in a hurry just after two in the afternoon. He rode like a fury for the first hour until his horse was in a lather of sweat. He was weak himself from his usual complaint under stress of emotion, but "God was pleased to strengthen both man and beast," and it was just as well, as their way lay over some of the steepest hills and under the shadow of Skiddaw and the giants of Lakeland.

Once before John Wesley had ridden like this with thought spurning the ground. Then it was on the day of the first cuckoo's song and there had been but

thirty-five miles between Oxford and Stanton. Then it was spring and the time of lad's love; now it was mature September and the ripeness of middle age, and a much longer journey to be accomplished. He was forced to lie at Keswick, but his heart was soaring. He had had "a solemn, delightful ride." Did he remember that other journey and think on the way that the Lord his God had led him? He reports that his mind was stayed on God, and we know that hymns were never far away from him in such delightful communion. There were appropriate ones to be hummed, as he rode, of God's providential way, and a very sweet one of finding direction "touched by the loadstone of Thy love." But somehow he could not leave it all to God just now, for he was up by three in the morning and pushing on again as fast as he could go. It was pitch dark, and no time for riding in that land of barrier mountains with old passes to be negotiated which went right over the back of the range. Great Gable, the Langdales, Skiddaw and Helvellyn were all alike to John Wesley on that dark morning: "I could see no road nor anything else." Dawn came up on the lonely rider near Penruddock Moor, but as soon after the mist gathered again. There was danger of bog and a trackless wilderness, but Wesley pushed on as marching on compass bearing, and at three in the afternoon trotted up in great delight to the little stone house at Hindley Hill. But there was none that answered. Only Hannah Broadwood hurried forward and whispered the words up to him:

"Mr. Charles left us two hours since and carried Sister Murray behind him."

It was a cruel blow. Wesley had been riding in danger and weakness for twelve hours, and now, within sight of home, he heard the news which broke him down utterly. He seems to have cried like a child, for when honest James Broadwood came in later he wept too at the very sight of his distress. And yet the only words he said were: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Ominous words enough, for they were from the service for the dead. But the brave heart was not yet conquered, for he said, "I must go on to Newcastle." The faithful Broadwood could not let that happen after such a ride and such a collapse, and at once he volunteered to ride on himself, and what was more, "with God's leave" to bring Grace Murray back behind him. At night Wesley was not allowed either to recruit his strength or to bind up his broken heart in secret, for a great congregation met to whom he must perforce preach. He was weak and his mind was bruised, and it is instructive to see just where he turned for a text. He chose that one he had used in Bunhill Fields at his mother's funeral, and in that action the fate of Grace Murray was really sealed. Whilst Charles Wesley was listening for the ring of the hoof of John's horse in pursuit, that son of his mother was preaching the funeral sermon of his love: "And I saw a great white throne, and I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne." That was always the fatal flaw in his arguments—he

must look for his mother's protection in his women friends, and when they were snatched from him he would employ her methods of defence, or think now of Grace Murray as though his mother had died. But he was suffering deeply, as was to be seen by the next day's fasting and prayer and by the reappearance of that old habit of writing down questions on inordinate affection: "And this I clearly perceived, that I had never before had so strong an affection for any person under heaven." Nevertheless there was always duty to be done, and Whitehaven had been left without a preacher, so that on Friday, instead of going on to Newcastle, this strange man turned back on his tracks: "I knew this was giving up all, but I knew God called." Here was a different journey to be faced, with the wind so high that Wesley could hardly sit his horse. But now he battled onward in the interests of the Kingdom of God as bravely as he had ridden before, touched by the loadstone of human passion. It seemed as though the wind would keep him back in his endeavor to reach Whitehaven for the Sunday preaching, but as once before he had fought in the forests of Georgia, so now he urged his way over "ye broad bare backs of those enormous mountains." By Saturday afternoon he had reached Whitehaven and had resolved to resume his spare diet, "which I shall probably quit no more." Both in his friendship with Miss Sophy and with Grace Murray he had felt less need of his stringent treatment for the flesh when all was going well, but now he turned back as before to this same sheet anchor in the blast.

CRISIS

On Sunday, October 1, Wesley suffered horribly. His heart went down into his boots like any stone, and he found no relief anywhere save in preaching, when he was able for that time to throw off the weight. He also went to church, where his mind was busy with that old theme of fire and the sea-imagery of storm. When he returned to his lodging he took up the Prayer Book in desperation and opened on a verse which seemed to leap right out of the page and speak comfort to his heart, and these were the words: "I should utterly have fainted, but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." There it was before his eyes, God's promise for the success of his own campaign, and he, Wesley, was the instrument in spite of his breaking heart. How could he faint when men were dying in their sins, when women were wearing out their hearts in the search for some great Purity which should heal all their afflictions, when little children were seeking the gentleness of the Lord? It was no time for fainting, for the Revival was but ten years old, and yet he had suffered a crushing blow and surely heavy enough to take the very heart out of him. Would God give him a word and some further comfort in dreams of the night? And so in prayer John Wesley's Sunday came to an end, and in the sheer exhaustion of misery he slept soundly.

Of course he dreamed. Fears took their personal shape again, and he saw a man bring out Grace Murray for execution. She spoke no word of reluctance, but walked up with him to the scaffold which stood

there in its stark outlines as Wesley had seen it at Tyburn with Charles at his best on the cart of death. The sentence was executed without her stirring either hand or foot. Because she was dead Wesley dared to look her in the face, and there in dreams he scanned every well-known feature until the face turned black before him and he could not bear it longer and went away. But away from her he could not keep, so he returned and begged she might be cut down. She was laid on a bed, and he sat by mourning as she had laid at Epworth in that old battle of hope and fear. But he could sit there now the more comfortably for the very reason that she was dead. At the first sign of returning life Wesley awoke with a start. The dream had taken up the old fear motive of a living, breathing, talking woman: "She came to herself and began to speak and I awaked." All his women friends, except Miss Sophy, had been great talkers with a vivacity which delighted Wesley's heart. And yet he feared, for was not that sparkle akin to fire and the devil's own onset? He never really plucked up courage to look at any of them comfortably save in dreams and death. Over a woman's corpse in Georgia he could wax quite eloquent, but that was because it was so entirely safe. He felt quite brave and gallant would they but not talk and not come to life—"dear dead women, with such hair too." Susanna Wesley had left no loopholes in her fool-proof method. She had made him the son of her own cloistered period, and, in the Providence of God, Grace Murray had now slipped silently to her side.

XXXI

DENOUEMENT

It had been a week of tremendous emotion. Now on Tuesday, October 3, Grace Murray stood before the altar in St. Andrew's Church, Newcastle, and plighted her troth with the black-coated John Bennet. There were two more in the bridal train, and an oddly assorted pair they appeared. Charles Wesley was there, all nerves, and hearing still those pursuing feet which had been so close behind him last Wednesday but had not yet succeeded in catching him up. George Whitefield was there with his seraphic squint and a great feeling of discomfort. Whatever he might think of Wesley's Arminian Theology he knew very well that this was serving the man a very shabby trick indeed. And Grace saw them all, these leaders of the Great Revival of Religion, and what were her thoughts in that solemn old church at Newcastle that day? Here she had been a child, here had dawned all that awakening life for her with joy of song and dance and love. Here she had lived under Wesley's roof after Alexander Murray had been swept from her side. But there was now no traveler on the road nor on the sea. After this fatal hour every man must hereafter hold his peace. It was the whole of ten days since Charles Wesley had stormed at Whitehaven, and it looked very much as though Brother John was

still in retreat there, for it was not until Wednesday, the 4th of October, that Wesley arrived at Leeds at nine o'clock at night.

Charles Wesley had still further plans, but Whitefield does not seem to have been willing to carry them out, feeling guilty himself and already glad to leave this impetuous groomsman. The only thing that remained was to go and meet John Wesley and tell him the whole tale, but Charles Wesley rather shrank from a direct attack. He was not at all sure of his reception, so he thought it would be better to meet in company with much vituperation and so escape that straightforward brother of his and his unanswerable logic. Charles and his father had always believed in denouncing the enemy with swelling veins and much fury. They could brush aside pricklings of conscience better so. Now Charles Wesley said they must all meet Brother John at Leeds, and there "he must acknowledge his sin before John Bennet and them all." But Whitefield contrived to outwit this plan by going on ahead and meeting John alone, and moreover he offered him half his bed after his long journey from the north. So the two great leaders of the Evangelical Revival divested themselves of their habits and disappeared behind the curtains of the same four-posted bed, while somewhere not far off Grace Murray and John Bennet lay together with the ghost of Alexander and the sting of memory.

It was Whitefield who broke the news to John Wesley that Grace was already married. He told him, with tears, that he much wanted them to wait until

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John himself should come, but that his "brother's impetuosity prevailed and bore down all before it." John was dry eyed and sunk in a kind of hopeless distress as Whitefield nervously chattered on without saying very much to the purpose, although his intention of comfort was obvious. He told John that in his opinion Grace was his wife and that he had said as much to John Bennet, but who could contend with Charles in eruption? It was beyond the power of a mere preacher of the Gospel, and he supposed John realized that and would accept his futility as excuse enough. This Whitefield had been a member of the Holy Club and had been summoned to Georgia by Wesley himself, and there had succeeded where his chief had failed. It was he who had introduced Wesley to open-air preaching in Bristol at the dawn of the campaign. Now with the Countess of Huntingdon, a blue-stocking friend to Aspasia, he was the leader of the Evangelical Revival in the Church of England itself. His theology was Calvinistic, and he claimed the merits of Christ only for believers—the select few of God's election. John stood with the lost sheep of the House of Israel and offered salvation to all, and it was his message which swept the people of no Church at all into his societies up and down the length and breadth of England. The heart and soul of his Gospel was that none could sin away the love of God, and everywhere he taught the Methodists to sing:

"For all my Lord was crucified,
For all, for all, my Saviour died."

But on that October night at Leeds there were no ghosts of Arminius or Calvin hovering around the four-post bed. John Wesley was in a fever and could not sleep, and Whitefield could only pray or gossip at intervals through the watches of the night. Thoughts were crowding in on John Wesley and searing his mind as he lay with his brain boiling on the pillow. Pictures came, and memories, a brother's disloyalty, a great campaign, and himself so weak now and so alone. He was twice bereaved, for his mother was dead and Grace was married to another. Where should he turn for help? He was not likely to find great consolation from his grotesque bedfellow with his prayers and lamentations and his obvious shutting of the door after the horse had gone. And then all of a sudden, as so often with John Wesley: "God took that matter into His hand, giving me on a sudden a sound and quiet sleep."

Next morning at nine Wesley heard that his brother Charles had arrived, and, quite definitely, he felt he never wanted to see him again. But Whitefield took upon himself the task of peacemaker and constrained John Wesley at least to meet his brother. Charles, true to his nature, burst into the room with a spate of vituperation: "I renounce all intercourse with you but what I would have with an heathen man or a publican." In the background poor George Whitefield and honest John Nelson wept on each other's necks. It was the same old scene of discord. Charles, angry beyond measure, stormed at John, who stood there just looking at him as though the whole torrent

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were only "adding a drop of water to a drowning man." Nelson, that strapping stone-mason, begged and entreated for peace between the brothers, and Whitefield wept and prayed, and still the storm thundered. In a general breakdown of nerve and a spate of emotion John Bennet entered the arena. He had the grace to speak not one word, and Wesley kissed him in absolute silence save for those strangled sobs which had broken faithful Nelson's heart to hear proceeding from his chief. And then the brothers were left alone. Charles, as quick as lightning, changed his tone, for he was no match really for this brother of his when the audience had gone. He now blamed Grace Murray as the jilt and the flirt, and rubbed in his advantage so well that John Wesley believed that he should see her face no more: "Neither did I apprehend she desired my company any more." That was exactly the conclusion that Charles Wesley wished him to come to and to maintain, and so the thunder died away.

But he reckoned without Grace Bennet. It was one thing to make the supreme sacrifice of her life, it was quite another thing to have no opportunity for a final explanation and leave-taking. A woman can never be left in that ruthless isolation of inconclusiveness. She was already aware that she could manage Bennet, and so the message came: "Both John Bennet and his wife desired to see me." Of course Wesley went as Grace well knew he would come, but the sight of him broke her in pieces. The three of them wept together and for a long time could say nothing at all, but Ben-

net knelt at his feet and asked pardon for what he had said against him, and Grace knelt on his other side sobbing helplessly and repeating again and again that "she never had spoke or could speak against me." Somehow the three of them contrived to eat their dinner, but at a look from Grace her husband withdrew, and Wesley and she were left alone. It was a scene worthy of an artist's brush. The littered table with its old-fashioned bowls and spoons, the October light of afternoon playing upon a strong man and a passionate woman with their faces strained with grief. Behind them both were memories so tender that as their eyes met there could be no reproach, only a mystified question from Wesley: "What did you say to my brother to make him accost me thus?" He knew she could not have twisted those glories of the road into a heathen transaction, but he was puzzled and he went straight to the point. And so tenderly came the answer: "I would rather die than speak against one to whom I have so deep obligations." And willingly she would have died for Wesley. She had indeed taken the harder course of living for him. In subjection to John Bennet she would save the fair name of Wesley from the least breath of gossip and ill fame. With her cool hand on the arm of that restive man she would steer a course to leave the rest of the beloved Ship's Company free from danger.

She had only a few brief moments over a battered dinner-table, but she made the most of them, and convinced him once and for all that for ten years she had loved him. Quickly she ran through the whole story:

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"That at the time you first spoke to me at Newcastle I loved you above all persons living. That after my engagement to John Bennet my heart was divided until I went to Ireland. That then it was whole with you and from that time till John Bennet met us at Epworth. That after his speaking it was divided again till you talked with me on the road, from which hour I loved you more and more till we parted at Hindley Hill; when your brother took me thence I thought he was carrying me to you—that when I knew more of his design I told him: 'I will do nothing till I have seen Mr. Wesley,' but that when it was told me at Newcastle, among a thousand things, 'Mr. Wesley will have nothing to say to you,' then I said, 'Well, I will have Mr. Bennet if he will have me.' "

The artless tale was told. Those two had been so free always with one another, and now Wesley must tell his side of the story. He must have told her of that awful Sunday at Whitehaven and of his text of comfort, and then, as only he could talk, he told her all it meant. The campaign must still go on. What God had done for this man and this woman remained even if their hearts were broken—that really did not matter. The love of God paid for all. They had always gone simply and naturally to prayer when alone together, and that must have been the only solution now: "After dinner I talked with her alone." And so they said goodbye. Did she watch him as he took horse and rode slowly away from her to Newcastle? None knows, none ever will know. The road was crammed with memories of her. Almost, they knew

every stone of it from those frequent journeys to Leeds and Birstall, where John Nelson would entertain them in the glad old days in his house of the bow window which he had built with his own hands. Now Wesley rode alone, with head sunk forward deep in meditation, and his horse finding his own way with nose towards Newcastle. A sure sign that things had gone deep with the horseman was that he had betaken himself to poetry and was composing jingles in his head as he journeyed. He had forsaken Susanna for the time being to show himself the son of his father, after all. The poetry is not good and there are thirty-one verses, as the whole of the life of Grace Murray had to be made metrical; also he begins at the beginning with those old Varanese experiences. It could only have been poetic licence which enabled him to write that he had ever "danced along the flow'ry way."

"Oft as thro' giddy youth I roved,
 And danced along the flow'ry way,
 By chance or thoughtless passion mov'd,
 An easy, unsuspecting prey
 I fell, while Love's envenomed dart
 Thrilled thro' my veins and tore my heart.

At length, by sad experience taught,
 Firm I shook off the abject yoke;
 Abhorr'd this sweetly poisonous draught,
 Thro' all his wily fetters broke:
 Fixt my desires on things above,
 And languisht for Celestial Love."

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So far to the Holy Club, but what was to be the remedy now for one at the height of his manhood? As he thought of Grace and felt again her hand stealing into his, the old sweetness of the days when he had loved Aspasia well-nigh overwhelmed him. A shy little phrase from the *Beggar's Opera* will not be denied place in his verses. That haunting song of India's coasts in "Over the hills and far away" had been on everyone's lips when the world was young. So demurely John Wesley gets it into his lament for Grace Murray, and betrays a dangerous reversion of mind to those sad old days of love and turmoil before the Hand of God was laid upon him in Aldersgate Street. Whither is he heading now in the terror of a broken heart? The verses jingle on their way and the horse goes on with slack rein and stumbling feet, but Wesley travels safely, and is his own mother's son once more as he draws into the straight and narrow way again at the last verse:

"Teach me from every pleasing snare
To keep the issues of my heart.
Be Thou my Love, my Joy, my Fear!
Thou my eternal Portion art.
Be Thou my never-failing Friend,
And love, O love me to the end."

It was an echo of the distress which had wracked the man before, when he turned to God from Miss Sophy, and begged tenderness from the Almighty in a sort of desperation. Now he was riding out of Grace Mur-

ray's life, and he was throwing himself again on the never-failing Friend. There had been a terrible collapse after that early shattering of love's dream. The fate of the Revival of Religion might even now be in the balance. He had left Grace Murray to the sharp-set intimacy of John Bennet's bed and board. They had made the supreme sacrifice of private love to public duty—but would they be able to keep it up?

It is true that Wesley had left with Grace a cumbersome text which should prove some sort of anchorage. She was never to forget it until her life's end. Dimly now over the circle of the years she chose it as the text for her funeral sermon, with that desperate energy of failing power which sees some distant goal and plants the flag there. She had allowed John Wesley to go on his way immaculate in mind and body, for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. Silently now she turned back and was subject to John Bennet. She was to have five sons by him in eight years, but in her heart she carried a secret which he could not share and which he would never know. She was to see all the Ship's Company leave her, but she kept her secret still. More than fifty years later, at her funeral amid the Derbyshire Hills, the Rev. Jabez Bunting would have to make the best of her strangely chosen text. It could not have been masculine enough for his six foot of strapping manhood, and it was so like a woman to faint. But something must be made of it, for he was the rising man in Methodism and was presently to hammer his way into English literature through the quality of his pulpit eloquence as Jabez

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Branderham of *Wuthering Heights*. But what a text for the woman to choose! His eyes were blind to the blood and tears of sacrifice, but that really did not matter so long as Grace Murray found her text again safely at the end of the journey: "I should utterly have fainted but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

XXXII

MOLLY

THE faithful city of Oxford was wont to cherish John Wesley in the wilderness ways of life. It was to her he returned when Varanese had swung, on the arm of Jack Chapon, out of his reach. There he had dreamed of Aspasia by moonlight and there he had written down the story of Miss Sophy. Now he was back again after the glory of the love of God had flooded his heart and revived the thirsty land of England. It was an ominous return. The burden of that mighty Revival of Religion had all at once become intolerable. The one who should have been his right hand, his own familiar friend, Brother Charles, had stabbed him in the back. He had robbed him of Grace Murray and set such a cruel gossip on foot as to besmirch the glorious work of Christ and worry the leader with constant tittle-tattle. It was Brother Charles who would keep pursuing him with names of his other friends linked with his own until he came to groan under whispers of Molly Francis and some lady of the name of Mrs. Lundy. Charles seemed to have developed a complex on the question of his brother's marriage and would give him no peace with his prying ways and his wagging tongue. Now amidst the dreaming spires of Oxford the hated gossip had died away. John Wesley found himself respected by all,

and discovered a wonderful change had come over the place since the days of stone-throwing and mockery. He had come to record a vote for his father's old friend, Dr. Morley—why should he not remain and give up the struggle in the dust and heat of the great unregenerate world outside that glorious city? His mind played round the thought. He had an independent Fellowship which was ample for his own needs, and he would be done forever with Charles' ceaseless claims on his purse. Should he not turn Jonah and let the Ship's Company founder? Why not run away, for the world had served him cruelly? What of the love of God and perishing souls? The urgency of the quest did not seem so keen in this delightful city of the Muses, where men followed knowledge like a sinking star and found reality in old books. Here, too, was the beauty of gardens, the light on grey stone and the peace of a slowly winding river. Who does not know the enchantment of the place? Who has not realized the way that those older universities hold their sons with chains which can be wrenched asunder only with blood-shedding? And yet, in spite of all, something from that outside world of cruel gossip and ingratitude still held good—something still called Wesley with a stronger voice than academic peace. It was the thought of his people—his Methodists—his Ship's Company—that would not let him rest. They had given him their love in rich measure. How could he desert them now?

And then a friend appeared with an alternate solution and a suggestion of a plan to solve all problems.

It seems that Wesley's old friend, Perronet, advised marriage, and also indicated the lady, who should be one of his own Huguenot friends and outside the circle of gossip of Methodism. It was a stringent purgative for the poison of a lotus-eater, but it extracted Wesley from Oxford and saved God's Revival. As he quaintly records his momentous decision, it runs, "I resolved to take up my Cross and marry." But it is likely that even then he might have wriggled off the hook had not the lady taken things into her own hands and helped him out in the matter of proposal and marriage. She knew the ropes, for she was a widow and had grown-up children to complete her education. Also Providence played right into her hands. John Wesley twisted his ankle on London Bridge and went to Molly Vazeille to be nursed and refitted for the battle of life, and certain it is that the lady made hay while the sun shone. She allowed him no time to write a treatise on inordinate affection, nor would she let him consult with all his preachers ere he took the plunge. Brother Charles more than they all was left in ignorance of the forthcoming marriage, and was dumbfounded when he heard the news. He confessed in impotent rage that he had no suspicion of such a bride, for he had been so busy bolting the stable door against Molly Francis and the rest of the sisters of Methodism that he had let the quarry escape, and almost wept for vexation. His *Journal* shows a very good representation of a saint in a tantrum as he carried his own dear Sarah out of the commotion to mingle her tears with his at a distance. It was only

Mr. Blackwell, who was powerful with the money-bags, who prevailed on him to behave himself and to present himself before his sister-in-law with a kiss of reconciliation. To this day the place of this strange marriage has never been discovered, and John Wesley does not give it so much as a mention in those meticulous Journals of his. Perhaps a certain secrecy was necessary when a man was set up with a brother like Charles Wesley who was bent on frustration and difficulty. The whole transaction was startlingly unreasonable for Brother John, and, although he brought it off in secret with Molly Vazeille, he felt uncomfortably certain that he owed the Methodists an apology. So much can be gleaned from Charles Wesley's *Journal*, where he reveals the gossip he has been able to pick up from the Society. He fortunately gives the outline of his brother's apology and flashes the Temptation at Oxford on to the screen: "Miss Hardy related my brother's apology: 'That in Oxford he had an independent fellowship, was universally honored, but left all for the people's sake, returned to town, took up his cross and married; that at Oxford he had no more thought of a woman than for any other being; that he married to break down the prejudice about the world and him.' His easily won lady sat open-eyed." On the other hand the Methodists are reported to have "hid their faces."

The lady is declared to have been easily won, but it is more than likely that it was she herself who did most of the winning, and it is true that she picked up John Wesley under an entire misapprehension. Fate

so decreed that it should be she, Molly Vazeille, who caught him betwixt the saddle and the ground. Fate so fashioned the plot that it was just Molly Vazeille that Wesley met when the strains of the Pilgrims' Chorus were muted and the Venusberg music was strident and jangling. They were both to reap a very whirlwind of sorrow and misunderstanding, but it was not Molly Vazeille's fault that such was the John Wesley she met at the opening of their married life. She could understand a man like that, but the real Wesley, Wesley the son of Susanna, Wesley the servant of God, left her guessing. From start to finish of that stormy voyage she was an alien, a stowaway on board with that precious Ship's Company. She came to hate them all with their pious phrases, their divine love and their splitting of hairs.

Molly Vazeille was in the habit of calling a spade a spade. She had once reigned in Threadneedle Street as a banker's wife, and she was at home in that region of hard currency, of obvious cash and clear-cut values. With the clearest of clear eyes she saw those early Methodists just as they were and not at all as they fondly hoped they were in the recesses of their own minds. Charles Wesley called her his best friend because she told him his faults so honestly, for she had not traveled with that young man and his Sally without summing him up and the situation as well in bold clear-cut outline. She saw how good it was to him to settle down in Bristol and come less and less to the help of his brother John. It irked her that Charles should be kept in comfort and the odor of sanctity at

Bristol while John Wesley paid him good money which he himself had earned in every part of the United Kingdom by sheer hard work. This might be the way of the Methodists, but to Threadneedle Street it looked very like nonsense, and she never lost an opportunity of telling Charles so at the top of her voice. He called her "a woman of a sorrowful spirit," and she called him a great many names, but all to do with his innate idleness. He could be busy enough when it pleased him, as when he tramped about with his little infant prodigy to get the London musicians to take an interest in the lad and advance the family honor, or when he chased over England to meddle with John Wesley's affairs, but when it came to the burden and heat of the day he had a way of retiring to his dear Sally and his hymns and that growing grave of olive branches in the churchyard of St. James in the Horsefair at Bristol. The austerity of John Wesley's New Room and the comfortable house in Charles Street, Bristol, where Charles Wesley lived are eloquent in contrast. In that house hangs a portrait of Brother Charles which is also eloquent. It shows the fat, rounded face of the complacent and the well-fed, and the modern devotee tries to excuse the apparition with explanation of some unfortunate twist of a neckcloth. The Methodists must still see the haloes on their saints, but it is more than likely that that picture of Charles Wesley is as the clear eyes of Molly Vazeille saw him.

It was the same with John Bennet. Mrs. Wesley saw the man just as the world would see him. The

note of the conquering hero is lacking from Bennet's diary after his famous marriage. He is still jealous of Wesley, and Grace travels with him in low spirits over those hills of the north. There is an anxiety and a teasing unrest about it all. There is short sleep and rain on the windows and a restless pushing on to some purpose as yet unrevealed. The inevitable break came at Bolton. With a great proportion of the trustees of the preaching-house he had walked out to form a society of his own on Congregational lines and with much talk of Calvin and of Wesley's popery. He had made a bid to wreck the Methodist societies of the north by going round in sound and fury declaring: "Now you must take either me or Mr. Wesley." But somehow it had all fallen rather flat, and it so obviously pained his wife that peace was found at Warburton where a meeting-house was built for him and where he could preach to his heart's content that he was no longer a servant but a son. His endless theological arguments distressed and confused his wife, but Mrs. Vazeille was a match for him and applied that acid test, again at the top of her voice. Bennet's diary gives the picture: "While we were thus conversing Mrs. Wesley came into the room in a great rage saying there should be no private meetings nor underhand dealings. She said I was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." That accusation of jealousy was near the mark in Bennet's case, for he states so clearly what was rankling in his heart at Bolton: "How unjust it was as well as un-Christian, since I was the first person the Lord sent to preach

among them and one of the chiefest instruments both for raising the society and building the house, for the trustees to give the house away without acquainting me. When the deed came to be signed my name was left out." Mrs. Wesley seems to have dealt faithfully with him by carrying the war into the enemy's country and by getting Bennet to confess that he never believed anything dishonorable of John Wesley either in his government of the societies or in his friendship with Grace Murray: "I thought it my duty to clear him of this accusation, his wife being present, lest some uneasiness should be created between them."

Uneasiness there certainly was, but not over Grace Bennet. Mrs. Vazeille saw John Wesley as a man and a husband and not at all as God's messenger of salvation. She treated him to the same eloquence as she had employed for Brother Charles and Brother Bennet. Wesley called it "squabbling," but it was something nearer lunacy when she pulled the diminutive man round the room and finally stood victor with a tuft of those desirable curls in her hand. One of the preachers, entering at the moment, reported the scene and also his own rage at the woman: "I felt as though I could have knocked the soul out of her." It forms an interesting background to the Great Revival of Religion to realize that for thirty years John Wesley faced life with his very lively skeleton in his family cupboard. At the Methodist Mission House today there hangs a picture of the lady. She is discreetly disposed of behind a door in the room which gives the pre-eminence to large representations in color of John

Wesley escaping from the fire and escaping to heaven from his death-bed. Her station is not far removed from Threadneedle Street, which she might glimpse over the head of the modern Methodists as they administer Wesley's World Parish in that great Committee Room. There is a certain dash about her carriage and a look in her eye as of Mona Lisa's enigmatic glance, but the prevailing impression is that the face is the face of a shrew.

That God chose such an instrument as Molly Vazeille to save the great Revival of Religion in England is but another confirmation of the fact that He moves in a mysterious way. Wesley said he married "to break down the prejudice about the world and him," but he accomplished more than that for his own peace of mind. Once married, John Wesley had cleared away a dangerous preoccupation. He had once for all solved the mystery of marriage, and like the charity-school boy with his mastery of the alphabet, Wesley discovered that he had also gone through very much to learn very little. It is true that at the first he is man enough to marvel that a woman should give herself to him just like that, and as he rode away from her after that strangest of honeymoons he dashed off a letter to her to tell her so:

"MY DEAR MOLLY,

Do I write too soon? Have not you above all the people in the world a right to hear from me as soon as possibly I can? You have surely a right to every proof of love I can give, and to all the little help

which is in my power, for you have given me even your own self."

He was forty-two miles from London, and he addressed his letter to Mrs. Wesley in Threadneedle Street, and added a postscript which he was to regret in the coming years: "If any letter comes to you directed to ye Rev. Mr. Wesley, open it: it is for yourself. Dear love, adieu!" But he was very soon to learn that the kind of love which Molly Vazeille could give him could really not hold a candle to the Love of God. He was thus to become heart-whole for the campaign and to find no need any longer to explore an earthly union. He was now wedded only to the Kingdom of God, and had cleared out all the old fears of fire and the mystery of women from his heart. Grace Murray had been so torn with anxiety because she had foreseen just that difficulty in a man like John Wesley. It was so terribly possible that the divine fire might dissolve and pale before the fire of earthly passion. Now between them all they had solved the difficulty and averted the danger. It must always be God first with Wesley if England were to be saved.

"Be Thou my never-failing Friend,
And love, O love me to the end."

Mrs. Vazeille demanded that Wesley should first of all be a husband and next the instrument of God's salvation. Grace had considered him always only in

the light of the Lord's anointed. It was thus very salutary for the fortunes of the Ship's Company that he should take his wife over precisely the same ground which he had covered with Grace Murray. It performed the psychological catharsis achieved by re-ascending in an aeroplane directly after a crash. So to Ireland they journeyed and to those wistful mountains round about Keswick. Mrs. John Wesley complained at every step, and she had a right to complain. She called the weather vile when it was vile, for, to her, it was just weather and most horribly uncomfortable. To John it was sent from his Father in Heaven, and so "rain's my choice." To him she seemed to be speaking blasphemy because she cursed the English climate up hill and down dale as they journeyed. Grace had never complained. Was she not one in the glory or agony of the same campaign? Was she not there to hold up the prophet's hands? One of her fears had always been lest she should do anything to weaken him and hinder his message. But to Mrs. Vazeille the case was vastly different. What kind of marital love was this to have her bumped all over those horrid mountains at her age, and an uncertain age at that, and to ask her cheerfully to endure a campaign of discomfort which even rough slave-trading John Newton, the terror of Cowper's life, had declined as too strenuous. She must have lost her temper scores of times a day, and John Wesley must have shut his eyes and hoped for the best. He writes to his friend Blackwell from that fatal Epworth a letter which shows how little he understood the woman

who now jogged at his side: "After taking a round of between three and four hundred miles we came hither yesterday in the afternoon. My wife is at least as well as when she left London. The more she travels the better she bears it. It gives us yet another proof that whatever Gods calls us to He will fit us for, so that we have no need to take thought for the morrow."

Molly Vazeille had her own ideas as to the propriety of what God called her to endure, and she spent much of her married life running away from this strange husband whom she had once picked up under an entire misapprehension. Whether she lived with him or not she filled one useful purpose, for he now found he was able to consider all other women as his sisters only, which was really what he had always desired. He loved to write to them as he had written to those girls at home who treasured his letters. That was the only comfortable way to regard women, and so he found freedom to help many who were despairing and broken in the terrible chances and cruelties of this vale of tears. He had a charm that even Molly Vazeille could not gainsay, for her very love of him rendered her almost insanely jealous. He had a cure of souls which he must discharge freely. He had a correspondence which he must sustain with the weary and heavy-laden. It was not Mrs. John Wesley's fault that she could not see it just like that. It was not her fault that she possessed a Threadneedle Street mind which could only see material things of life even as our modern world sees them. Molly Va-

zeille saw Wesley's converts through Threadneedle Street eyes and hated the lot of them. One poor woman, who had undergone the torture of a more than Enoch Arden return of one husband from the grave following a complication of two other aspirants, Wesley had won to the love of God and made her housekeeper at the New Room at Bristol. She sat at the head of his table and looked after a house full of preachers and sustained a spiritual correspondence with Wesley. But when Mrs. John visited Bristol she called the poor woman just what the world would call her, making no allowance for the contrite spirit: "The whore now serving you has three husbands living." It was baffling, it was preposterous, it was an insult to any wife to read letters written to such a woman from that incomprehensible husband of hers. One day she found in his riding-coat such a letter, unsealed and unashamed, but surely those venerable locks suffered again for the writing of such words to a woman like Sarah Ryan: "The conversing with you either by speaking or writing is an unspeakable blessing to me. I cannot think of you without thinking of God. Others often lead me to Him, but it is, as it were, going round about; you bring me straight into His presence. Therefore whoever warns me against trusting you I cannot refrain as I am clearly convinced He calls me to it. I am, Your affectionate Brother." Of course it was the kind of treatment to set a woman with a past like Sarah Ryan's completely on her feet, for after all it was Christ's own method, but Mrs. John Wesley could never have

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appreciated that fine point. She developed a kind of persecution mania, and searched every nook and cranny of Wesley's neat jackets and beloved desks to find incriminating evidence against him and his unfaithfulness to the wife of his bosom. She must have found a strange collection of manuscript and some amazing letters written to this strange little man during almost half a century of life. There is no trace today of the Varanese correspondence, and it is thought that Mrs. John Wesley destroyed it all. How Aspasia escaped is a mystery, but she survived in John Wesley's own manuscript. The whole of the Miss Sophy episode was conned over by Mrs. John Wesley in the company of her son Noah Vazeille. Together they decided that it would make fine printed matter for the papers, and looked for more incriminating manuscripts in the fastness of his private desk. The bureau in Wesley's room was broken open and his papers stolen, and there, as one glorious find, the whole of that long treatise on Grace Murray came to light. Noah Vazeille took possession of it on the instant and carried it in triumph away from the Foundery. Later he gave it to a friend, and later still it found its way into the safe keeping of the British Museum. It is from that old manuscript with its corrections in the well-known hand of Wesley that the evidence comes for the friendship of this man and this woman with the background of Alexander the sea captain and the wonders of the Grace of God. In that unemotional museum collection of England's treasures this strange document holds its place. It is

right that it should be there with Diana's Temple and the relics of primitive man, for it is eloquent of the ageless love of man and woman and of their unconquerable faith in the Love of God.

John Wesley did let Mrs. Vazeille have one model of his epistolary style all to herself, and obtained at first hand without the necessity of stealing it. In this letter he does not say that when he thinks of her he instinctively thinks of God, which was a phrase of which he was fond. It is rather a letter written in his best reasoned vein and is a calm statement of their unhappy differences, and begins thus: "Dear Molly, I will tell you simply and plainly the things which I dislike. If you remove them, well. If not, I am but where I was. I dislike your showing any one of my letters and private papers without my leave. This never did any good yet, either to you or me or anyone. It only sharpens and embitters your own spirit. And the same effect it naturally has upon others. The same it would have upon me, but that by the Grace of God I do not think of it." Then follow nine separate things which the fond husband dislikes in his wife, and these are followed by ten good actions which she might do to set matters right between them. What he disliked most of all was the way she spoke to the servants. There in his home at the Foundery, where Susanna had reigned with her "Pray do this" or "Pray do that," he heard the strident tones of his Molly blackguarding his servants like any fishwife. He could not get away from that voice, and it lacerated his nerves to hear such language in

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his quiet house. She also would dart out on him as he welcomed his friends to his study and kept a watch to see who went up and down the stairs. As for his relations, she would have dealings with none of them. John Wesley was not allowed to give them a dish of tea even in those pretty cups of his. She doubtless thought they came for money, as they were mostly down on their luck, or possibly they might discuss the lady of the household in unbecoming terms.

Mrs. Vazeille was one of those annoying conversationalists who have but a nodding acquaintance with the truth. This also irritated Wesley, with his sometimes almost stupid honesty. The poor woman was only trying to go one better than those clever Wesleys when she declared, as for her first husband, why "Mr. Vazeille learned Spanish in a fortnight." This fluency of lies was meeting the poor man at every turn, and he kept hearing echoes of the wild things his wife had said—how he beat her, how she might not sit in his presence without his leave, how he had ridden in Kingswood with Sarah Ryar and a host of other slanders which she well knew to be quite false. It is a miracle how God's Grace sustained him through such a storm, but he did get as far as saying, when she left him, that he would not ask her to come back again. The poor woman was to be pitied in that God had matched her with an hour of English History that demanded more than ordinary common sense and courage. She died in 1781 and was buried without Noah Vazeille informing Wesley of the event. There is a suggestion of a blow given and received

even at the very last by that angular woman: "I came to London and was informed that my wife died on Monday. This evening she was buried, though I was not informed of it till a day or two after." Well the plotters knew that the leader of the Methodists ought to have been at his wife's funeral, for was he not known as the apostle of all holiness?

John Wesley, through the years, managed to get his wife into right perspective as his mother, in the old days, had done with her explosive Rector. He looked upon her as a dispensation of Providence and so could not pray "Take Thy plague away from me," but rather "Let me be purified, not consumed." He realized that it had all been for the good of the campaign, for he might have settled down, as Charles had done, had his lady sustained her initial blandishments "as she well knew how to do." Instead he had been kept in one ceaseless fever of itinerancy in the interests of the Kingdom of God. The world was of the same opinion and enjoyed the joke: "No trap so mischievous to the field preacher as wedlock. Matrimony has quite maimed poor Charles, and might have spoiled John and George if a wise Master had not graciously sent them a brace of ferrets," which is a remark Mrs. Vazeille would really have liked to have made herself, at least, in so far as it applied to Mrs. George Whitefield. Her clear-cut mind and her spade philosophy would have appreciated the point of view that attributed the success of the Evangelical Revival of Religion to a couple of uncomfortable wives.

XXXIII

LONG SHADOWS

SINCE the Lord had removed his plague, seven years more had passed over John Wesley's devoted head. The years now seemed to go very fast, and so differently from the leaden feet of those seven years that he had once contemplated serving for his dear Varanese. His mother had told him he would see things quite differently when he stood on the borders of eternity, and now, as always, he found her right: "Ah, my dear son, did you, with me, stand on the verge of life and see before your eyes a vast expanse, an unlimited duration of being you might shortly enter upon, you can't conceive—how different the sentiments of sensitive pleasures, the desire of sexes, and pernicious friendships of the world would be then from what they are now while health is entire." So had his mother always tended to show up the trivialities of this life against the background of a vast eternity. To the young Wesley it was perhaps hardly fair, for spring in the Cotswolds and College quads in moonlight can be very beautiful in themselves. But now that he stood where his mother had stood, on the verge of life, it was all just the way he felt himself. They said he seemed to have the look of a man "sunk in God." Those old moving memories had been left a very long way behind him. And yet

before he joined his mother in that unlimited duration of being there was just time for his past life to step out from the shadows. It happened one day to Wesley as to his father, but here was no posturing on the hearthrug as John o' Styles. Matters had gone too deep for that, and now John Wesley answered simply not a word. The campaign had prospered gloriously, and thousands had flocked to his standard. All over England and Ireland, in the West Indies and throughout America the Ship's Company had propagated itself, until its success caught Wesley's breath with wonder and an instant bowing of the head in great humility: "What hath God wrought!" In the lane leading to the city he had built him a new chapel, with old ship's masts for pillars and a little garden at the back to fulfil those old cravings for just one bit of home.

The Foundry had been sold, and now Wesley lived in his own house, whose front windows commanded Bunhill Fields and his mother's grave. The house was well provided with cupboards such as her careful soul must have loved, and the walls were paneled in plain wood. The fireplaces were comfortable and most inviting for a family conclave. But Wesley was ending where he began, for in his bachelor home he thought he was really no better, after all, than just a lonely Fellow of his College. He had a close friend, Henry Moore, who was to live in the house after Wesley's death and whom he had chosen to look after all his papers. He was to have those precious manuscripts at his disposal among which

he had so hated Mrs. Vazeille to rummage, and to Henry Moore also he had given his little copy of Thomas à Kempis in its neat little leather case. So one day, to the two friends, the bustling Thomas Oliver ran in. He was Wesley's Book Steward, and a very poor one at that, but he had written one amazing hymn in his:

"The God of Abraham praise,
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of Love."

He had, moreover, chosen his wife exactly according to Wesley's rules of reason, and had achieved success where his master had singularly failed. Thomas Oliver set out to select a wife with grace, common sense and a small competency, and all were gloriously found dwelling in Miss Green from the north of England. But as he had chosen the best horse in Methodism with no reason at all save that the beast fell in love with him at first sight, it is highly probable that his success in matrimony was due to the poet and musician in him rather than to the man of reason. He was a fit messenger to bring to Wesley a request from a very old friend. He had been walking in Moorfields and had met one Mrs. John Bennet, who desired that she might speak with Mr. John Wesley. Where was she? At the house of her son, who was the Dissenting Minister of the chapel on the pavement in Moorfields. She was really only

just round the corner, and after all these years! Wesley was obviously overcome at the suddenness of it all. Should he go or should he stay? Then turning to Henry Moore he proposed that they should go together, and so set out for that house in the fields where once he had preached of new birth and Grace Murray had found life from the dead. Now she had been John Bennet's widow for thirty years. She had brought up a large family of small children on Susanna Wesley's own rules and had done all for them herself. They were only babies when their father died, but she had never wasted a minute, and had managed a little English literature into the bargain. She had looked with love into the childish faces and had been helped on her way. Now she was an old woman of seventy-five, and God was going gently about His work of taking down her old clay cottage, as she quaintly called her body. Wesley himself was ten years older, and felt strangely unequal to this meeting of ghosts from the past.

Even blunt Henry Moore records that the scene was deeply affecting. He was also able to state that the woman was worthy of his leader's devotion: "It was easy to see that notwithstanding the many years which had intervened, that both in sweetness of spirit and in person and manners she was a fit subject for the tender regrets expressed in those verses which I have presented to the reader." Now there was no more poetry. Wesley was strangely silent as the two men walked back to their bachelor's house in the City Road. It was his custom to make caustic com-

ments when his friends married, as that it had not improved them or that they were fallen from a high estate, or as in the case of Aspasia, that he despaired of finding grace among gentlewomen. But now he has the grace to say nothing at all. He paid his lost love the tribute of silence, and Henry Moore never heard him name her name after that one last supreme meeting. The years had done their worst and had drawn deep lines on that sweet face. The pain of it all came in on Wesley like a flood. It was the wreck of old beauty and the death of old passion, and men must needs be silent when even the shade of that which once was great has passed away.

In that same year of 1788 Charles Wesley died. Susanna had always found him a difficult baby to rear, but it was just like him to achieve the unexpected and live to be eighty years old. With his habitual impetuosity he had rushed into this world quite two months before he was expected, and had to be wrapped in wool on arrival as are all precious things. But his nervous little body carried its early history to the grave. He was always just that sort of person. He would always find it difficult to walk and not faint. He will return to London after just setting out, appalled at what lies before him. He will rush to horse and fall off just as readily. He was an incredibly bad rider and altogether too nervous for the highly strung creature between his knees not to realize that the best place for him was in the ditch.

Charles Wesley was really not to be depended on, and he was a thorn in Brother John's side to the end

of the chapter. He coquetted with Whitefield and Lady Huntingdon, not realizing that the whole of the fortunes of the precious Ship's Company must stand or fall by Arminius and not by Calvin and his horrible decrees. So John's letters cry out against him: "I give you a dilemma. Take one side or the other. Either act really in connection with me, or never pretend to it. Rather disclaim it and openly avow you do and will not. But acting in connection with me, I mean take counsel with me once or twice a year, as to the places where you will labor. Hear my advice before you fix, whether you take it or no. At present you are so far from this that I do not even know when and where you intend to go. So far are you from following any advice of mine, nay, even from asking it. And yet I may say without vanity that I am a better judge of this matter than either Lady Huntingdon, Sally Jones, or any other—nay, than your own heart." Charles Wesley was prone to seek "guidance" not to go to places where he really did not wish to go: "Either you move by those impressions which you account Divine, or, which is worse, *sit pro ratione voluntas*." Charles knew very well he was never going to put himself really under John's laborious yoke, and his brother stormed to deaf ears: "What I have desired, any time these ten years, is either that you would really act in connection or that you would never say you do; either leave off professing or begin performing. O brother, pretend no longer to the thing that is not; you do not, will not act in concert with me. Not

since I was married only (the putting it on that is a mere finesse), but for ten years last past and upwards you have no more acted in connection with me than Mr. Whitefield has done. I would to God you would begin now or else talk no more as if you did."

The grand bone of contention between the brothers was that old question which haunted the mind of their father and poisoned his spirit. Was it to be now with the Methodists a case of Church or of Dissent? Charles Wesley was vehement for the Church and gloried in the rout of all Dissenters. Gleefully he says of Whitefield that he mowed down the Dissenters. He himself would not admit one traveling preacher to the ranks of Methodism unless they would give a pledge that they would live and die in the Church of England. He stormed about over England weeding out undesirables with a too heavy hand until John Wesley begged him "not to check the young ones without strong necessity. If we lay some aside we must have a supply, and of the two I prefer grace before gifts. We must have forty itinerant preachers or drop some of our societies. You cannot so well judge of this without seeing the letters I receive from all parts." Force of circumstances was driving John Wesley into this position "to Dissent or be silent," and silent he could never be, for the Love of Christ constrained him. A great part of his societies were made up of Dissenters who had found new life with the Methodists, so that he was driven more and more to the position of desper-

tion which he thus describes: "Church or no Church, we must save souls."

Charles Wesley had come to the conclusion that only Church of England souls were worth saving, and so he preached a famous sermon about a remnant being left from the fire, and he preached it everywhere he went. Two parts of the Methodist societies could perish so that the third was drawn from the fire, and this third part were the children of Mother Church. So had the glory of the sacred flame come to mean just that sort of fire to Charles Wesley, and the Ship's Company to him was nothing more than the few who could scramble up over the side of "the old ship—The Church." But the heart of his brother John was very tender for the lost sheep of the House of Israel. His was the world parish, and when all America was added on he had to do something about it. The hungry sheep looked up and were not fed, so he ordained his own ministers in order that they might administer the Sacraments of Holy Church. The Rector of Epworth must have turned in his grave, but John had not yet done with his sins. He justified the horrid deed by those wretched reasons of his, and what was worse by arguments from the Presbyterian Kirk. Charles Wesley must have felt that both he and his father had lived in vain when he received this letter from his unrepentant brother: "If you will go hand in hand with me, do. But do not hinder me if you will not help. Perhaps if you had kept close to me I might have done better. However, with or without help I creep on!"

LONG SHADOWS

Now Charles Wesley was dead and John was preaching still. He was, in fact, just then crying his heart out because his brother had gone on before him and first obtained the prize of entry into the Many Mansions. He had mastered his emotion until he had given out his brother's hymn of "Wrestling Jacob," and now the words rang through the little chapel:

"My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee."

The old man could get no further, and there he sat and wept with the long shadows creeping up around him and the long thoughts of home, of sorrow and the Love of God. Like Susanna and her Rector, John could forgive his brother Charles everything for having written that one hymn of the Traveler:

" 'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me!
I hear Thy whisper in my heart;
The morning breaks, the shadows flee,
Pure, universal Love Thou art;
To me, to all, Thy mercies move:
Thy nature and Thy name is Love."

It was the sum and solution of the whole mystery of life. That inexorable "Traveler Unknown" had met Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, had kept company with men of broken heart on an Emmaus road, and was even now present with a very old man crying his

heart out in a stuffy Methodist Chapel. Up and down the scale the Ship's Company sang their craziest of crazy tunes and with so great an output of emotion as to leave them quite breathless. They knew all the words by heart, and in any case they could not have seen them in those hymn books of Charles Wesley's for their eyes were full of tears. On they sang, with a shout of triumph which would fairly land them all in Heaven. But they could not overtake that nervous, artistic, little figure which even then had outstripped them and cut in to the Mansions of Light:

"Lame as I am, I take the prey,
Hell, earth, and sin with ease o'ercome;
I leap for joy, pursue my way,
And as a bounding hart fly home,
Through all eternity to prove
Thy nature and Thy name is Love."

XXXIV

CHARIOTS OF FIRE

THERE remained but three years more for John Wesley to creep on his lonely way. In 1790 he gave up keeping his accounts. Taking a long and reasonable view he justified this startling decision by saying: "For upwards of eighty-six years I have kept my accounts exactly. I will not attempt it any longer, being satisfied with the continual conviction that I save all I can, and give all I can, this is all I have." Now John Wesley in 1790 was aged eighty-seven years, so that Susanna must have set the children early to their keeping of infant pence. But in spite of that pardonable exaggeration he was his mother's true son in saying that he had kept accounts long enough to arrive at a general conclusion about money. He was not going to make his mind up in a hurry about so important a matter at that.

In 1791 he preached his last sermon at Leatherhead in Surrey and returned to his house in the City Road to die. The friends who welcomed him in the courtyard near the chapel were struck by the way he got out of the coach for the last time. He who was always so active on the King's business could now but creep upon his way. With difficulty he climbed the narrow stairs of his own house and sank down on a chair, quite spent. The man was dying, but it took

some little time for him to make up his mind even about that. He thought at first if everyone left him quite alone he might feel better, but death was forcing his hand. At last he confessed to his anxious friends, "I must lie down," and in another moment they had summoned the doctor. But Wesley was still unconvinced, and tried to smile away the anxiety of the Ship's Company with "Doctor, they are more afraid than hurt." But it was his last joke, for quickly he was plunged in the stupor of death. Around his bed were gathered the sons and daughters which God had given him in the bands of the Gospel. They watched every movement and garnered every word. His mind was turning, turning, in that strange strait between life and death, and ever and anon it brought to the surface flotsam and jetsam of his long life. He made one heroic attempt to sing a psalm of Watts', and queerly enough it was all tangled up in his clothes, and he discovered it as he tried to get out of bed and to dress. It was one of the springtime ones from that first hymn book of his, and often he must have tried it over in that bungalow in Arcady rising early in the morning when Miss Sophy came to breakfast.

"I'll praise my Maker whilst I've breath;
 And when my voice is lost in death,
 Praise shall employ my nobler powers.
 My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
 Whilst life, and thought, and being last,
 Or immortality endures."

He was soon obliged to return to his bed, and once there he conducted phantom services and preached ghostly sermons in a dream kingdom all his own. Sometimes he took his friends by surprise by darting at them a quick intelligible question: What was the text he preached from at Hampstead? To which the answer came like some chorus rehearsing fate: "Ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich." It was the right answer, and it brought peace to the dying man as he muttered: "That is the foundation, the only foundation; there is no other." It had been a long and reasonable view of things that had brought him there, but his mind was satisfied with the conclusion. Here was a rule of poverty, of chastity and obedience, which far transcended the rules of the Holy Club, for it was informed with the charm of Christ—"ye know the grace." It was the evangelical rule lighted by the enthusiasm of St. Paul. It was the gospel of Wesley himself, who had thought the world well lost for the Grace of God. And now he could preach it no more. His mouth was dry and his wits wandering—what should he do? All at once a reasonable avenue of hope appeared and he commanded them with great eagerness: "Give my sermon on the love of God to everyone." He had once had a sermon on Christian charity which he had preached for Sister Hetty to show the mercy due from us to evil men. But he had come to stand in that bad company himself and had discovered that

he was even in need of just that mercy. He had learned that only the mercy of God was sufficient to cover all his sin. Love of God, Grace of God—it was all one, and it had taken him all his life to learn. It was the only love of which he was not afraid, and it was the complete answer to the sin of the world: “Give my sermon on the love of God to everybody.”

The widow of Charles Wesley had come to say goodbye, and he greeted her affectionately and held her hand. Gently she bent over him and moistened his lips with a drop of water. He was sinking into his last sleep, but the reaction to that last ministry was instantaneous. His mother had always insisted on a grace being said for food or drink, and even death must tarry while Susanna’s son obeyed her ruling. So came the old home grace at the very end of the journey: “We thank Thee, O Lord, for these and all Thy mercies; bless the Church and King: grant us truth and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord for ever and ever.” It must have sounded an incongruous declaration for a dying saint as his disciples stood round him grasping after any word of comfort. They could not see, with eyes blinded by tears, the tremendous importance of that scene. They could not know that John Wesley was ending just where he began.

In that borderland country between life and death only his mother was any more real to him. He had come so into this world and so he would return. “Bless the King.” Now which King did Susanna mean by that? It had been after a controversy on

sovereignty that John Wesley had been born and now it was all cropping up again from hidden depths of the unconscious. It was clear that neither Grace Murray nor anyone else ever really had a fair chance with John Wesley. Susanna had seen to all that under the old thatched roof of Epworth Rectory before ever the brand was plucked from the burning: "I do intend to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child."

He could call a dear friend "eyes of the blind," and he had spoken of Grace Murray as "his right hand," but he was not going to give to them anything more of his immaculate little person than that. His heart was his mother's and belonged to her God, for so she had forged his chains in that remorseless discipline of the nursery when she had essayed, single-handed, the salvation of the souls of her children. Was it Mrs. Charles Wesley or was it really his mother there, hiding behind the curtains of his bed? His eyes were growing dim, and he was greatly in need of love and protection, and he was moreover lost in the dark. But all at once almost in ecstasy came the glad words: "The best of all is, God is with us."

It was a great consolation to the Methodists. They were a company of shipwrecked mariners and they felt themselves embarked on a sea of troubles. The chief of their credentials was an inordinate affection for their dying pilot and for the rest of the Ship's Company, but what had they beyond that? Their hands were strong to save a castaway because their hearts were tender with the love of God, but the

Church of England had cast them adrift and they could find no desired haven among the Dissenters. They had a firm conviction that they would all meet again in heaven, for they were accustomed to sing a sort of rollicking sea-shanty at their funeral services:

"There all the ship's company meet
 Who sailed with the Saviour beneath;
 Rejoicing, each other they greet,
 And triumph o'er sorrow and death."

But what were they to do here and now? They were a huge flock of sheep gathered from every fold and carrying every brand upon their bodies. They used the Prayer Book of the Church of England, but all their polity was of Presbyterian construction, and who ever heard of such a union as that? They were the heirs of Samuel and Susanna Wesley in this strange composing of that old quarrel of English Church and Dissenting Puritan, but it was a peculiarly difficult legacy for those who should come after. Now their leader had declared with conviction and yet in sober reason: "The best of all is, God is with us." Taking a long view of things, he had said that they bore the authentic sign and seal of a divine society. No Church could bear more unmistakably than they the marks of the Lord Jesus. It was no idle tale that desire of theirs to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land. It gave their queerly assorted ranks a certain family likeness. They tried to take life as Christ had taken it and they lived by

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His inexorable example. But theirs was no mechanized imitation of the life divine. Rules they might have, but the whole was transmuted into friendship and a love that warmed the heart. They swung through life to Christ's own rhythm. He was as real to them as though He had overtaken them upon the Emmaus road. Simply they had gone back to live in Nazareth, to weep at Calvary and to rejoice in a garden at Jerusalem. Theirs was an older orthodoxy than old Sam Wesley's, an older orthodoxy even than the Church of Thomas à Kempis, for it was the orthodoxy of One in Galilee who was Himself a heretic: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

The little old man gathering up his feet in that old-fashioned bedstead was the same who had raised all England for Christ. To him had been given the heathen for his inheritance. He had been sent out into the world under the strain and stress of being son to Samuel and Susanna Wesley, and he had been well-nigh deafened by rams' horns of Dissent and trumpets of orthodoxy. Calvin and Arminius had contended for his soul, and he had trembled under threats of what went forward in the Mind of God. But in a life packed with emotional crises he had come to believe that nothing profane lurked at the heart of the universe. Burning and shining there at the center, the essence of God partook of the warmth and the salvation of human love. So he was ending his long life very simply, and as a child comes home from school: "The best of all is, God is with us."

As John Wesley was whirled away into that world of light it was appropriate that the friends at his bedside should hear the rush of a chariot of fire. Instantly they dropped onto their knees and prayed passionately that the mantle of their Elijah might flutter down to them. Then they went out and told of his death and sent his message all round England in a glorious challenge of hope: "The best of all is, God is with us." They buried him in his own back garden, which was also just as it should be for this man of the many gardens. Only Charles Wesley and his father were fit to lie in consecrated ground. They buried John Wesley secretly, for fear of the great crowd of mourners, and that is perhaps why, to this day, some of his disciples refuse to believe that he ever died. Their number dwindles, but to some, still, he walks the City Road or darts in and out of Bristol's New Room. Sometimes they have watched him among the packing-cases in an old yard in Aldersgate Street, sometimes under Paul's dome. Sometimes they have seen a little figure sprinting round the playground at the Charter House or have watched a young man at work in his rooms at Lincoln College. Perhaps it is to Oxford that he will return, like that other Scholar Gipsy who waited for the spark from heaven to fall, for, after all his wanderings, it was only Oxford he wished to have written on his coffin. But for John Wesley there remained no need to tarry longer, for he had learned the secret which that other sought. In the midst of his own wild brotherhood he had brought down fire from heaven, even to a

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world of half-believers in but casual creeds. So if his ghost still walks the warm, green, muffled Cumnor hills or stays to watch the line of festal light in Christ Church Hall, it is in no spirit of quest, but rather in the ecstasy of love's satisfaction.

"But what—I dream. Two hundred years are flown
Since first Thy story ran through Oxford halls."

XXXV

GRACE FINDS PEACE

It was the last day of the old year, and up in Derbyshire an old friend had come to see the dying of the year in Grace Bennet's cottage. The two friends talked so much that they forgot to pray at parting, and Grace was worried afterwards at that omission. But it was the last day of the year 1791, and as they reviewed that past twelve months there was one event that eclipsed all others and drew their eyes and loosed their tongues. It was the year of Wesley's death, and the new year would open on an England bereft of his venerable little person. What was said of him in the Derbyshire cottage? Grace called it "chitchat," and fell to writing a journal next day as a sort of penance, which seems to point to the fact that she was one of those people for whom John Wesley could never die. Indeed, now, she confidently looked forward to meeting him again, and had her eye strained forward for sight of him beyond the veil: "The result of that affair I leave till that great decisive day when the secrets of all hearts will be opened. I love and honor him as a father and shall do while I have a being. I doubt not we shall spend a happy eternity together." So said Mrs. John Bennet, but she was speaking then, not of her husband, but of John Wesley. She had been a widow for forty years, but

the lovely thing about Heaven was that there they neither married nor were given in marriage, and that there even Charles Wesley could not clatter in upon that lover's meeting.

Now, in old age, Grace longed to be gone and felt as though God held her off from harbor when she would fain have scudded before the wind for home. So she wrote in her journal, and so she remembered the old days at sea: "I was countermanded when I thought myself in sight of my port, with my sails spread, and filled with the gales of the Divine Spirit. How have I seen when I have been upon the ocean a ship with all her sails unfurled and right before the wind, the mariners rejoicing and myself with them, thinking we were so near our desired haven, when suddenly a crosswind has sprung up and blown us quite away. So am I. Lord help me to improve the time because the days are evil."

She had moved from her Chinley home to Chapel-en-le-Frith, and there she had rejoined the Methodists. She delighted in the Class Meeting and the services, and could still acknowledge, after being in the school of Christ for sixty years, that "His banner over me was love." But sometimes she was troubled by bad dreams, and sometimes those dreadful arguments of her husband, about free Grace and imputed righteousness, frightened her. She told her son how she hated these religious bickerings, and even could not refrain from asking John Bennet on his deathbed if he was really sure of all those notions of his. She had not forgotten how near she was to heartbreak

when Bennet and Wesley had parted company for the sake of those notions and because Bennet's name was left out of the list of the Bolton trustees. It had cost her another of those children of hers, for in the storm of her distress the little life also had been overwhelmed. The spate of theological jargon, under which she had suffered, left her a prey to the terrible temptation of thinking that all she had known and experienced of the love of God was really just a trick of her imagination. Did she and Wesley just think God was with them and that His Presence restrained them when all the time it was without foundation in fact? Looking at life like that, in terms only of body and mind, she might have married Wesley and bid defiance to God and the still small voice. Human love seemed bound up with muscle, gland and sinew, so was it possible that the love of God could be a lie when she killed it in the labyrinthine ways of her own mind? Night after night she would dream and agonize and lie alone with her sorrow. Day after day she would see Satan in every corner of her house. But her own loyalty was of such a quality that not for very long together could she doubt the loyalty of the love of God. Joy would keep breaking through, or as she says: "I had fainted had not the Lord Jesus appeared and commanded the dogs of hell to depart—I believe that God loveth with an everlasting love." In the last resort she turned back to a morning in Moorfields when a clear voice had sounded out its challenge: "My soul for yours if you continue lying at the feet of Christ." But sometimes

now she maintained the challenge only in desperate confidence: "If I perish I perish at the feet of Christ."

Grace Murray had made her supreme sacrifice because she had feared to tarnish the love of God with implications of carnal affection. Now in old age she had to fight the battle all over again and face alone the specter of the mind's omnipotence. Passionately, she sought for something still beyond the body, something coming from above. Desperately, she demanded a constancy of love with its foundation eternal in the heavens: "When I meditate on the sufferings of my Redeemer all the cares and sorrows of life dwindle into nothing. I feel exalted above the world and above myself. Give me my God and let the world forsake me." But the friends of her old age could never guess the terrors of her heart. She was one who was known to be able to keep a secret, and, as she says herself, God was her only confidant.

She left behind for her son what she calls "Some broken hints of my life" in the journal written in old age and in Wesley's verses written between Leeds and Newcastle. She much wanted to get the story of her life which Mr. Wesley had written down from her mouth, but Noah Vazeille had been at his thieving work and that old manuscript found its way into the British Museum instead. There remain but hints, for as she says: "I would rather say less than more, having always been afraid of saying or doing wrong." But from another source comes a very beautiful hint of the life of Grace Bennet in her old age. She would often receive visits from her god-daughter, Sarah

Goodman, who stepped across to her cottage from Eccles House. The girl loved the old lady for her charm and her strength and her wise counsel. Together they would talk of the things of God, and when Grace removed to Chapel-en-le-Frith the child was disconsolate. She would look across at the little empty house with all a girl's pensive hero worship, and she would write down all she could remember of the sayings of her friend. One secret she had learned was a great consolation for absent friends, for Grace had introduced her to a very beautiful rite over the old-fashioned teacups: "One thing I beg of you, and that is that you will retire to prayer at five o'clock in the evening, which is the time I do, when we shall be offering our prayers for each other at the same time there are hundreds putting their petitions to the Almighty." It was the usual tea-time hour, and it was also Wesley's own hour for prayer, and the hour in which to remember the rest of the Ship's Company. It was a particularly Methodist Communion of Saints, for it was wedded to the teapot and the intimate circle of home. So it reads over and over again in Wesley's own diaries: "5. Tea, conversed, prayed." It was in keeping with that Primitive Christianity, so dear to his heart, that a common meal should thus be raised into something sacramental in that warm circle of love and memory. It was a League of Prayer in the eighteenth century which served to unite the scattered members of Wesley's large company into one glorious fellowship. It is from Grace Bennet that the secret comes, for well she knew her Wesley,

and so she kept company with him in a mystic communion over battered teacups. But she only wished now to be gone, and she turned her face to the new century unwillingly, her eyes a mist of tears: "I have lived to enter upon another century and am now nearly eighty-five years of age—for me to live is Christ, but to die is gain. Sometimes I have pleasing thoughts that some of my old companions will come to meet me and welcome me home—but my eyes forbid me at present saying more."

Grace Bennet died in 1803. As her friends stood round her in her last hours they saw her constantly praying and talking with someone within the veil. She had always expected God to send her old friends to lead "their sister spirit home." She was eager to join them, but must still fulfil the will of God even in death: "The Lord's time is best," she kept assuring them. Her mind was exercised with the old problem, and even now she set a seal on her lips being fearful of saying too much rather than too little. The faithfulness of God was still the burden of her sinking life, and even on her deathbed the theme of loyalty was her care: "Some people I have heard speak much of our being faithful to the grace of God, as if they rested much on their own faithfulness. I never could bear this; it is *God's Faithfulness* to His own word of promise that is my only security for salvation."

As Grace Bennet slipped away into the shadows the old memories made free with her. Odd scraps of those old hymns, old remembered conversations, came sweeping up to the level of consciousness. She

was back in Newcastle, where one had said, "We shall meet to part no more." She was back in the glorious days of Bonny Prince Charlie and the hymns of exile which England had found suspect. Now it was Grace who was the exile and was languishing there in that old bed in Derbyshire, longing for release and whispering through those old cracked lips: "When will His chariot wheels advance to call his exiled home?" She was very weak and in great pain and distress, but in that last hour only the things of the spirit mattered. After a long and sadly heroic life she now could take her discharge in deep thankfulness from the hands of the Only Faithful One: "About midnight she fell asleep in Jesus with these words, which were the last that could be understood: 'Glory be to Thee, My God, Peace Thou givest me.' "

They buried Grace Bennet amid the hills of Derbyshire. They buried her in her husband's grave among the Dissenters of Chapel Milton, and perhaps the rams' horns looked as though they had won the day. But a strapping young Methodist, Jabez Bunting, preached her funeral sermon, and his theme was a phrase from the Book of Common Prayer, once seen through a mist of tears at Whitehaven long ago. Here was a strange linking up of memories and a strange peace after the storm of faction, for the words of the funeral text were Wesley's own words of comfort: "I should utterly have fainted but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." They were the words that Grace had appropriated over a table littered with the rem-

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nants of a sorry meal and seen by the light of an October afternoon in Leeds, now long ago. For fifty years she had cherished that text and bound it about her heart, and after such loyalty it was no wonder that she so passionately demanded faithfulness in God Himself.

And God had been as good as His word. He had shown signs and wonders in England's green and pleasant land. Paradoxically, it had been that passionate disciplined thing called Methodism which had kept England safe in an age of revolution. Grace Bennet's faith had become her country's fruition. Her sacrifice had wrought a transcript of her own experience in an England tortured with the horrors of an industrial and political cataclysm. The love of God held good through all, and men sang their way through hell itself with a faith which all the horrors of French and Industrial Revolutions could not conquer:

"In want my plentiful supply,
In weakness my almighty power,
In bonds my perfect liberty,
My light in Satan's darkest hour,
In grief my joy unspeakable,
My life in death, my heaven in hell."

It was unreasonable, but men looked at one another and wondered. Was it possible that it might be, after all, the highest reason and the deepest wisdom? A doctor of medicine had preached Wesley's funeral

sermon, and the whole discourse had been designed to show how reasonable a thing is religion. In any case it had been proved a power which could keep a man and a woman from fainting in the cruel wilderness ways of life. It was a power able to free the slave and rescue little chimney sweeps from torture. It was a power capable of raising the ranks of labor to sit in the Council Chambers of Empire. It was a spirit to breathe passion into the English novel and set the chariots of fire soaring through literature. It became so steadying a stream of deep morality that even today, in a time of national crisis, the power of that old Revival of Religion shows itself not quite spent. Even today little bald-headed, bespectacled business men track the way of Christ on Brighton road and the hills of the north. Theirs is the honesty, the constancy and the chivalry which is the very life-blood of England. No flames of hell can frighten them into religion, for they have sealed up the Bottomless Pit long ago. Like any schoolboy they will take what is coming to them and will even pay for what they have had. But if they catch sight of His hands and His feet . . . The Love of Christ constrains men still.

EPILOGUE

TO estimate the sheer passion of the Evangelical Revival of Religion it is necessary to work the problem backwards. Emily Brontë has herself done this and has put the key to the mystery into our hands. It was she who clapped Jabez Bunting between the covers of *Wuthering Heights*, and it was she who made Heathcliff, in his passion of love for Catherine, behave just as a Methodist in the morn of conversion. She might be a stranger to earthly love, but to the vagaries of Divine passion she was as to the manner born. The meeting of her own parents had been in that very atmosphere of religious emotion and hymn singing. It befell in that year of the revival at Woodhouse Grove School when boys' voices had sung Charles Wesley's hymns far into the night and Patrick Brontë and Maria Branwell had walked among the trees there and had talked of love and of God. It was entirely in the tradition that Maria Brontë should bring to Haworth, as part of her marriage portion, a copy of à Kempis abridged by Wesley. After the death of her mother Emily Brontë was entrusted, for all her upbringing, to a Methodist aunt from Cornwall where that particular type of Methodism is at its intensest. The tinge of Celtic melancholy in the Delectable Duchy gives fine edge to escape and to love.

At Haworth again Emily Brontë fell heir to that whole Grimshaw legend and even to the market language of Wesley's friend and preacher in the Yorkshire Round. In fact that old parsonage where Wesley and Grace Murray tied up their horse was but a stone's throw from Emily's home. In addition she had the old Methodist magazines, which Charlotte Brontë mentions, to piece out imperfect knowledge and from which to imbibe visions, conversions and ecstasy at her own sweet will. She was shut in with Methodism upon a moor, and became, as it were, a connoisseur of this strange inheritance. When she came to try her hand at a novel, here was her stock-in-trade. The monster Heathcliff is sexless and appears rather as religious passion transmuted and forced into a grotesque body. He draws human breath awkwardly, and when he woos he does so in the language of Divine love. To show the ecstasy of Heathcliff's passion for the dead Catherine, Emily Brontë can describe it only in this way: "He has just come home at dawn and gone upstairs to his chamber, locking himself in. There he has continued praying like a Methodist: only the Deity he implored in senseless dust and ashes—till he grew hoarse and his voice was strangled in his throat." Grace Murray might perish to keep these diverse kinds of love in their right order, but Emily Brontë confuses the Divine and the human in a glorious burst of passion. So was the English novel transformed, and so stands Methodism, torn from its context, and seen in a starkness of outline and an iridescence of flame.

EPILOGUE

And how does a Methodist pray? There was a boy once at Woodhouse Grove School who became the friend of Ruskin and Rossetti, and he can give the answer. He was a contemporary of that other schoolboy who heard Jabez Bunting preach that riotous sermon in Woodhouse Grove Chapel which Emily Brontë makes into the uproarious dream one of Jabez Branderham. The artist, James Smetham, has given a picture of the praying Methodist in his description of one of God's saints: "He sold a bit of tea, and had a little pension, and staggered along in June days with a tendency to hernia, and prayed as if he had a fortune of ten thousand a year."

Today there has been made a new Recall to Religion, but we seem to lack that passion and that faith which can so call on the Capital of God. At the heart of the problem is an unspoken fear. What if those Heavenly Reserves are themselves overdrawn? What if Religion itself is bankrupt? In this new age of reason we know that we spin all faith, all love and all passion, like the spider, out of ourselves. We are obsessed with complexities, inhibitions, glands and blood. We have killed romance and passion, for we have chained them fast to the flesh. There remains no longer the wisdom which cometh from above. Who knows what secrets of a horrid past might not be revealed by the relentless analysis of the praying spirit? But if we could still pray with abandon, there would be no more fitting petition than Wesley's theme of passionate adoration:

SON TO SUSANNA

"O Thou who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart."

It was no anæmic "Sweet Saviour," caricature of religion, that turned the world upside down. It was rather something as fierce and elemental as a flash of lightning. William Grimshaw of Haworth called it the fire of God in the soul, and Grace Murray thought of it as the strength that could keep her from fainting in hell. Wesley knew it as a force of consuming fire to shrivel the falsehood from the souls of men. Between gasps of choking breath, with their voices strangled in their throats, even as Heathcliffe, the Methodists sang:

"In vain Thou strugglest to get free;
I never will unloose my hold!
Art Thou the Man that died for me?
The secret of Thy love unfold:
Wrestling, I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy name, Thy nature know."

Emily Brontë believed it a power worthy to challenge the constancy of her own wild heart, and awaited, breathless, the consummation of God's own good time:

"Burn, then, little lamp; glimmer straight and clear.
Hush! A rustling wing stirs, methinks, the air.

EPILOGUE

He, for whom I wait, thus often comes to me.
Strange power! I trust Thy might; trust Thou
my constancy."

Where did that uneducated, inexperienced girl get her profound knowledge? It is unlikely that she picked it up in her brief sojourn at Miss Wooler's Academy for Young Ladies near Birstall. That school must have been, at least, advanced could children come by all the experience and all the knowledge of a John Donne there. Yet Emily Brontë could rival his fierce lines and would have known exactly what he meant when he said:

"Batter my heart, three person'd God; for you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to
mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee and
bend
Your force to break, blowe, burn and make mee
new.

.
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I,
Except you enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee."

Now Charlotte Brontë said that her sister did not get her knowledge from books, but that the secret lay in herself. It was in her own warmed heart that she, with the Methodists, apprehended truth. She and they knew, and had always known, that terrible as an army with banners was the passion of Redeeming Love.

SON TO SUSANNA

The significance of John Wesley lies just there. He made that tremendous experience possible for all men. Over his own battered heart he opened up a way into the Eternal Mystery without fear of election or favor of priest. In that stupendous flash-point of Refining Fire the veriest clod-hopper at the plough-tail was made heir to the wisdom of all the ages.

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Letters of John Wesley, Standard Edition, I, 211.

II. SUSANNA WESLEY

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"There is nothing I now desire to live for but to do some small service to my children; that as I have brought them into the world I may, if it please God, be an instrument of doing good to their souls."—Susanna Wesley.

Arminian Magazine.

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Memorials of the Wesley Family (Stevenson), p. 86. "But it is beyond thanks . . . till another world where if I get first into the harbour I hope none shall go before me in welcoming ye Lordship into everlasting habitations."

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XIII. FEARFUL SAINTS

Charles Wesley's Journal.

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XIV. DESPERATE REMEDIES

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XVI. MISS SOPHY COMES TO BREAKFAST

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XXIX. STRATAGEMS

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XXXIII. LONG SHADOWS

Stevenson's *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, p. 204.
Museum at City Road for Thomas à Kempis to Moore.
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Leger's *Wesley's Last Love*, pp. 124, 125, 120, 119, 130.

SON TO SUSANNA

Letters of John Wesley.

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Tyerman's Life and Times of John Wesley.

XXXIV. CHARIOTS OF FIRE

Journal of John Wesley, VIII, 80 (note), 129-144.

I am indebted to my husband for the Epworth Grace.

Matthew Arnold's *Scholar Gipsy*.

Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, p. 440, gives inscription on coffin:

"JOHANNES WESLEY, A.M.
OLIM SOC. COLL. LIN. OXON.
OB. 2DO DIE MARTII, 1791
AN AET. 88."

Charlstown Hymns No. 9.

XXXV. GRACE FINDS PEACE

Diary of Grace Bennet as given in Memoirs by her son.

Journal of John Wesley, III, 438. (Picture of this Diary.)

"Blessed be God that ever I was joined with the poor
despised Methodists. . . . Their rule and order is my delight."

Old letters of Grace Bennet (original letters).

MS. of Miss Sarah Goodman.

Life of Jabez Bunting by his son.

EPILOGUE

Methodist Magazine, XXXV, 395, gives letter from Mr. Fennell
(Maria Branwell's uncle) March 21st, 1812.

Wuthering Heights.

Letters of James Smetham.

John Donne—a favorite poet with Wesley.

I am indebted to my son for Heathcliffe's prayer.

Market Language. Grimshaw's well-known phrase was: "If
you perish, you shall perish with the sound of the Gospel
in your lugs."

Joseph in *Wuthering Heights* says to Catharine: "Und t'sound
o' t' Gospel still i' yer lugs."

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